

I welcome you all to my latest epic length story. It's an ambitious tale chronicling the life of Harry James Potter, the brother of the Boy Who Lived. If you are at all interested in finding out how a child, who was loved so very much by his parents and brother, could become one of the most infamous wizards of all time, I invite you to read on.

This story is rated Mature for violence, sexual situations, and language.

Harry Potter and The Boy Who Lived

Chapter 1

An Alternate Beginning

Manifestation of Destiny

(Oct. 31st, 1981)...

"Avada Kedavra." With a burst of green light, a serpentine-looking man casually killed the Muggle standing in his way. The Dark Lord's blood red eyes showed neither enjoyment nor anger at the monstrous deed. Killing Muggles was simply a service that he performed for the wizarding world.

The sound of frantic footsteps caught the Dark Lord's attention. He turned and saw a Muggle woman, tears running down her face, staring at her dead husband from the foot of the stairs. "David! David, please, get up!" she cried.

The Dark Lord couldn't help but let a soft laugh escape his lips. "I'm afraid that you are now a widow, Mrs. Evans."

"You monst—"

"Imperio," the spell immediately stopped the frantic woman's screams. "You will take me to Nathan Potter."

The woman obediently turned on her heels and led the cruelest man on the planet upstairs where her two grandchildren were sleeping.

She pushed open the door at the end of the hall and walked forward into the room where a single crib housed the two young boys.

Voldemort followed the Muggle with a satisfied smile on his face. Ever since he had been told of the prophecy that foretold his fall, he had done little else but plot for the destruction of the child. It had not taken long for his network of spies to find all the children born near the end of July. A clerk at St. Mungo's under the Imperius curse had easily obtained and copied the records for every child born near the end of the month of July. From those records, the Dark Lord learned of two children born on the 31st of July.

Harry Potter, born July 31st at 22:42, and Nathan Potter, born July 31st at 22:50. Nathan Potter was the last child born in magical Britain in July.

Born as the seventh month dies, the Dark Lord remembered thinking as he read the records. Nathan Potter would be the one who could bring about his doom. That would not happen. He would simply kill the boy before he ever became a threat.

Unfortunately, the ancient magic with which Albus Dumbledore had protected the Potters was, as much as Voldemort hated to admit it, practically impenetrable.

Voldemort's followers had attempted to kidnap the blood-traitor Sirius Black and torture the location from him, but the mission had failed, and now Black was hidden away someplace under a Fidelius charm as well. His spy had reported that Dumbledore himself was Black's Secret-Keeper, making getting to Black impossible.

In his frustration, Voldemort had ordered his spy to kidnap the Potter children; however, that rash plan had failed spectacularly as well. The additional wards around the Potters's property wouldn't allow the children to be forcibly taken outside by anyone without a blood tie. The plan had nearly cost him his only spy in the Order of the Phoenix, and it was only Peter's quick talking that convinced the Potters of his innocence in the matter.

The Dark Lord was not a fool. He recognized that thus far his plans had been rushed and ill-conceived. No, Voldemort had always learned from his mistakes, and so, he waited. He would wait and plot the child's demise until an opportunity could present itself. In the meantime, he vented his frustrations by launching attacks against wizarding Britain. He was relentless. Giants, trolls, vampires, werewolves, and Death Eaters were all sent out on nightly missions.

While the war escalated, his spy, who was acting as a mail carrier between Lily Potter and her Muggle parents, was hinting to the Potters how much the mudblood bitch's mother and father wanted to see their grandchildren. Eventually the Potters agreed with Peter, who suggested that the order meeting on Halloween, being only an hour or two, would be safe enough to leave the children with their grandparents, especially since Peter would remain on location to guard them.

On Halloween night, the Potters dropped their children off at their Muggle grandparents' home. Immediately upon their Disapparation Peter had contacted the Dark Lord, and now Voldemort was prepared to ensure his eternal domination.

The Dark Lord looked between the two children lying next to one another in the crib. "Which one is Nathan Potter?" he demanded of the Muggle.

The woman quickly took one of the children in her arms and presented him to the Dark Lord.

"Place him on the floor," Voldemort ordered.

As soon as the child was on the floor, it began to cry. Soon afterward, the other Potter child woke up and began crying as well.

Having served her purpose, Voldemort ended the female Muggle's life with a swift Avada Kedavra.

The woman falling dead at the feet of Nathan Potter only increased the frantic children's cries. Looking between the two Potter boys, Voldemort raised his wand to kill Nathan Potter's twin first; however,

as he was about to send the killing curse at Harry Potter, the magical ward he placed around the Muggle's home quivered and failed.

Dumbledore! Voldemort would recognize his old professor's magic anywhere. He had come to defend his chosen one, but the old man would be too late this time; the boy would die by his hand! Turning his wand away from Harry Potter, Voldemort snarled, "Goodbye Nathan Potter. Avada Kedavra!"

The Dark Lord smiled as the green light shot out of his wand and struck the child in the head; however, everything soon went wrong. Nathan Potter screamed out in pain and the killing curse seemed to pool around the child's forehead before flying backwards at Voldemort, who took the full brunt of the curse in his chest.

With a scream of absolute agony, Voldemort felt a soul tearing pain as his body was destroyed.

Present and Past

Godric's Hollow, (Dec. 11th, 1988)...

"Please, Mum," Harry whined while giving his mother his best puppy eyes.

Lily sighed. They had had this conversation far too many times. "Harry, no. You and Nathan are much too young to start learning magic."

It had been seven years since the fateful night in which the Dark Lord had vanished. Seven years since her youngest son, Nathan, had been proclaimed the wizarding world's savior. Seven years since she and James had found out that one of their closest friends had set up her parents and their children to die.

A lot had changed in the world, and not all for the better. Once the Dark Lord had been defeated, Lily had wanted to drop the Fidelius charm on Godric's Hollow and live their lives as normally as they could. Unfortunately, that was not destined to happen. Albus had warned against dropping the charm. At first it was just to be while the

Dark Lord's followers were being captured, and after what happened to Frank and Alice Longbottom, Lily was thankful she and James had listened to Albus. However, when several known Death Eaters avoided jail by claiming the Imperius curse, Lily and James had been forced to keep the charm up for longer than they had intended.

When Harry and Nathan were five, they had considered dropping the charm. That decision had been nixed after one family outing into Diagon Alley. They had been mobbed by well-wishers and people wanting to take pictures of Nathan. Needless to say, both boys were terrified of the massive screaming crowds, and it was only Albus' timely arrival with several former Order members that saved them from being completely run over.

After the Diagon Alley incident, Albus had suggested that James and Lily raise Harry and Nathan under the Fidelius charm, to avoid Nathan from becoming arrogant about defeating Voldemort. Albus only needed to ask James what he would have been like if he had defeated the most powerful wizard alive as a one-year-old to gain the couple's support. Lily would not allow Nathan to grow up an arrogant berk like her husband had once been, and James had long ago accepted that he never would have gotten Lily acting like he had during his first six years at Hogwarts.

Lily and James were proud to say that they had raised Harry and Nathan without showing any favoritism. When they told the two boys about how Nathan had stopped Voldemort, they made sure to mention that it was not any superior wizard power that had saved Nathan, but rather a one and a billion chance piece of magic. This ensured that Nathan didn't get a big head, and that Harry didn't feel inferior to his twin.

"But Mum, you said you learned magic before you went to Hogwarts," Harry argued.

"That was completely different, Harry," Lily replied. "I was almost ten at the time."

"But Nathan and I are eight. That's so close to ten."

The mention of Nathan caused Lily to glance around the living room curiously. "Where is your brother? I'm surprised he isn't out here arguing along with you."

Growing up with no other real companionship, her two boys were practically inseparable. Oh, they had their arguments, and they usually ended when one or the other said something hurtful, causing the other's magic to lash out accidentally. Nothing too harmful of course –Nathan removed all of Harry's hair once, and Harry had turned Nathan's skin pink on a few occasions. The two boys simply loved each other too much for even their magic to do anything more harmful than embarrass one-another.

"He's outside with Dad and uncle Sirius," Harry said with an innocent smile on his face.

Lily immediately felt herself stiffen. James had certainly grown up since Hogwarts, but whenever he and Sirius or Remus got together with the boys it was as if they all reverted into their 17 year old selves. "And what are they doing?" She asked.

Harry smiled brightly. "Uncle Sirius promised to teach us how to fly on real brooms over the holiday."

"He what!" Lily thundered.

"Yep, Nathan's outside testing the Nimbus 1700," Harry said, ignoring his mother's increasing ire. "You know, if you started teaching us magic, we wouldn't spend so much time trying to get Uncle Sirius to tell us about the pranks he pulled, or bothering Dad to get us a real broom."

Lily felt her eyes narrow, and she cast a suspicious look at her smiling son. "I thought you said your uncle Sirius already bought a Nimbus 1700."

Harry's face paled at what he had accidentally given away. "Well...he..."

"Harry, did your uncle buy you and Nathan a Nimbus 1700, yes or no?" Lily stared sternly at her oldest son.

Harry stuck his hands in his pockets and rubbed his toe into the carpet. "No," he admitted, looking very guilty about lying. "But Sirius and Dad have been hinting they will be getting us brooms sometime either over Christmas or for our next birthday."

Lily stared at Harry for a while as she mulled over her son's words. James had indeed been pressing to get the boys a racing broom for Christmas, but she had managed to get him to admit that eight was still a bit too young. She was certain, though, that he would be getting them both brooms for their birthday. Thinking of her two sons flying around on those twigs of death, recklessly playing Quidditch like their father, terrified her more than she was willing to admit.

Perhaps, she thought, she could prevent her two boys from becoming totally Quidditch-obsessed like her husband. While any wand magic was certainly impossible, she could teach them some theory as well as practical stuff with Potions, much like Severus had done with her when they were younger.

The thought of Severus Snape caused Lily to pause. She hadn't written to him in over a year, and hadn't seen him since a Potions convention in 1985. Their meeting had been awkward to say the least. A part of Lily had been angry at Severus for his role in giving Voldemort the prophecy, but she couldn't deny that he had changed sides at considerable personal risk to save her. She was not deluded enough to think Severus cared at all about James.

Still, she knew that Severus was teaching at Hogwarts, and that he probably demanded nothing but the best from his students. Severus simply didn't have the patience or temperament to expect anything less of them. It would certainly be in her children's best interest to know their Potions before stepping foot into his class.

"Harry, it was wrong of you to lie to me," Lily admonished. "I would have been very unhappy with your uncle Sirius, and you know how much I dislike apologizing to him."

Even though he was being chastised, Harry couldn't help but let a small smile grace his face at his mother's comment.

"I suppose, though, that I could begin to teach you and your brother some magic," Lily said as Harry let out a whoop of joy. "There will be rules. First, you will not be getting a wand. You're just too young to adequately control one right now, you could hurt yourself. That means you'll only be learning theory for wand classes, okay?"

Seeing that Harry didn't look exactly happy at not getting a wand early, Lily pressed on. "You will learn Potions from me, and I will let you brew things. You will not, under any circumstances, try to make something without me being there. Is that understood?"

Harry's disappointed quickly changed into delight as he nodded his head. Lily couldn't help but smile.

"Alright, Harry, now go tell your brother. We'll start your lessons this weekend."

Lily watched as Harry happily ran out of the room to go find his brother. Shaking her head and wondering what exactly she was getting herself into, Lily went into the kitchen to make herself some tea.

Harry's excited expression had reminded her so much of herself. She also had wanted to know everything about magic, and was upset when she found out that she couldn't get a wand till she went to Hogwarts. Lily remembered Severus' smile, not the smirk like he did now but a real smile, as she ranted about how unfair it was that they couldn't get a wand before they turned eleven. How much their lives had changed since then.

She recalled the moment their friendship had ended. How Severus called her a 'mudblood' that day after their owls. She had been heartbroken that he could do something so cruel, and had refused to listen to his apologies that summer. Lily knew that Severus held a great deal of anger towards his abusive father; she also knew that he had to be careful in his own House because he was a half-blood. Even when she noticed him hanging out with a rougher crowd starting

in their sixth year, she never thought he'd become a Death Eater. Not Severus.

But he was. For how long she didn't know, but he was.

Still, Lily couldn't help but see his smiling eleven-year-old face when she thought of him, and she grudgingly admitted to herself that she was not exactly blameless in her onetime best friend's descent into the Dark Arts. She had been an emotional teenager. She had felt hurt and betrayed in the worst way by her best friend, and so she had lashed out and abandoned him. She was angry at Severus, but she never imagined, or wanted, him to fall the way he did.

Making up her mind, Lily slowly stood up. She had a very long and overdue floo call to make, and an old friend to make up with.

A Family Outing

Godric's Hollow, (July 31st, 1991)...

"Nathan, hurry up, we're going to be late!" Harry yelled up the stairs.

James laughed at his son's impatience. "Relax, Harry, we'll have plenty of time. The alley isn't going anywhere."

"But Dad, we've been eleven for hours already, and Nathan is taking forever."

"I'm here. I'm here. I'm here," Nathan said jumping down the last few steps.

"Finally," Harry said with a roll of his eyes.

Nathan rolled his eyes at his brother. "The bookstore will be there waiting for you, Harry, don't worry."

"Yeah, well, unless we hurry, Mum won't let you and Dad stare at all the new brooms," Harry shot back, causing both Nathan and James to exchange a look of horror.

"Lily, dear, we had best be leaving. Don't want to fight the crowds, after all," James called out, quickly ushering his two boys into the kitchen.

"Already?" Lily asked.

"Well, you know, better be safe than sorry," James said shiftily.

Lily just stared appraisingly at James for a moment. "Alright. Nathan, remember your hat, and if anyone asks you your name, you say it's what?"

"Dudley Dursley." Nathan smirked.

Lily did not look at all pleased and turned to James accusingly. "That is not funny. The poor boy can't even hear the word 'magic' now without grabbing his..."

"Overly huge butt," Nathan quipped, but quickly fell silent at his mother's glare.

"We fixed everything, Lily," said James soothingly, "and the boy clearly overreacted –"

"That treat caused him to grow a tail, James!" Lily snapped angrily. "It was his first experience with magic."

"He was being a bully," Harry pointed out calmly.

"That's no excuse to stoop to his level," Lily said heatedly before calming herself. "I'm not having this argument again. Let's go."

After a few quick glamour charms, the now unrecognizable Potter family floo'd to the Leaky Cauldron and made their way through the magical gateway into Diagon Alley.

"Do we have enough money, Charles?" Lily asked, using James' middle name.

"Yes, how about we split up? I know Nathan has his apothecary stuff, but Harry has run out," James said.

"Alright," Lily agreed. "Let's meet in Ollivander's at noon." Seeing the ecstatic look on her husband's face Lily quickly added, "But so help me if you show up without any of Dudley's school supplies and a stupid grin on your face, I will ban you from taking Dudley to Quality Quidditch ever again."

Properly chastised, James quickly led Nathan towards Madam Malkin's while muttering about getting their shopping done quick.

"So where too, Harry?" Lily asked.

"Flourish and Blotts," Harry said immediately, earning a smile from his mother.

Harry had taken to learning magic from his mother like a fish to water, and Lily couldn't help but be proud of her son's enthusiasm. Ever since she had begun teaching Harry and Nathan, she had struggled to keep the lessons interesting for Harry without going over Nathan's head with the material. This was nearly impossible, however, as her older son had taken to obsessively reading every book the Potters owned on magic. She couldn't count the number of times she had seen her son fast asleep with a large book draped over his chest or practicing wand movements with a stick in the backyard while Nathan played Quidditch or practiced some pranking magic. It had even gotten to the point where Lily had ordered Harry to go play Quidditch one day with his brother and uncles.

While not completely identical, both boys shared their father's build and his black hair. Harry, though, tamed his unruly hair and liked to slick it back in a traditional pureblood way with a great deal of ever-holding gel. Nathan, on the other hand, seemed to enjoy mimicking his father's unruly hairstyle.

Besides their hair, another difference between the twins was that Harry had inherited Lily's bright green eyes while Nathan had his father's chestnut brown eyes and high cheekbones. Of course there was the one obvious identifier: Nathan had the now-famous lightning

bolt scar on his forehead from where Voldemort's killing curse had failed to kill him.

"Alright, Harry, now remember: I have your list, and you can only pick three other books," Lily said as she guided her son into the shop.

Fifty-five minutes later an exasperated Lily Potter escorted her son out of Flourish and Blotts and quickly went about finishing up his shopping. She couldn't believe they had spent nearly an hour in the bookstore. If she was late to Ollivander's, James would never let her forget it. Well...James would drop it or be left to sleep on the couch, she decided, but Sirius and Remus would never let her forget it, and James would of course inform his fellow Marauders.

Arriving outside of Ollivander's, Lily checked her watch and saw they were five minutes early. Entering the shop, Lily immediately noticed James and Nathan sitting in a chair as Mr. Ollivander seemed to be fitting an excitable Irish boy with his wand.

"You got here early," Lily commented.

"Dad got us here twenty minutes ago," Nathan grumbled.

Lily couldn't help but smile. She still had James wrapped around her finger after all these years.

An excited scream of joy alerted the Potters that the now dancing Irish boy had found his wand. Seven Galleons later and the boy's mother dragged him out of the shop, giving an apologetic glance to the Potters as they left.

"Ah and now that that bit of business is wrapped up, I suppose that both the young Potters will be needing wands today?" Ollivander asked, turning his attention towards them.

"How did you know, sir?" James asked removing his glamour. "No one has recognized us all day."

"My boy, I remember every wand I've ever sold. Dragon heartstring, twelve inches, rather good for transfiguration, isn't it?" Ollivander

gestured to James' wand. "And Mrs. Potter. Willow with a unicorn hair, rather bendy. Still, a good wand for Charms. I do wonder what you two boys shall end up with. Who's first?"

Nathan boldly stepped forward and Harry watched as his brother was measured by a magical tape-measure and then given wand after wand for testing. After what felt like an hour of Nathan lifting a wand above his head, and Ollivander snatching it back, the old man went back to his workstation and brought back a wand while seemingly deep in thought.

"Try this one, Mr. Potter. Holly and Phoenix feather, eleven and three-quarters of an inch,"

Nathan took the wand, and immediately waved it around causing red and gold sparks to fill the room.

"Bravo, Bravo, Mr. Potter, well done," Ollivander said as Lily, James, and Harry congratulated Nathan for finally finding his wand.

"Curious, curious," Ollivander mumbled.

"Excuse me sir, but what's curious?" Nathan asked, still grinning at his new wand.

Ollivander peered over his small spectacles at Nathan. "I remember every wand I've ever sold, Mr. Potter, and as it turns out the Phoenix whose tail feather rests in your wand gave another feather, just one. It is curious that you would be destined for that wand when its brother gave you that scar."

The atmosphere in the wand shop quickly dropped as Nathan now looked at his wand in horror. Seemingly oblivious to the tension, Ollivander said, "Yes, yes, it is very strange how these things work out. After all it is the wand that chooses the wizard."

Everyone was silent for a moment before Ollivander turned to Harry. "Well Mr. Potter, you're next. Yes, we must hurry. If you take half as long as your brother, I expect we'll be here for a while."

With the tension seemingly broken, the Potter's settled down and watched as Ollivander began handing Harry several different wand combinations. "Maple and Dragon Heartstring... no not right. Rosewood and unicorn hair... simply not. Holly and Dragon Heartstring... oh, no, no, no. Maple and Phoenix feather... absolutely not but oh my what an explosion. Ash and Dragon Heartstring, Ten inches, a very temperamental wand."

Harry took the wand and immediately felt a shiver go from his hand down to his spine, with a quick flick, the wand shot out a silver stream of magic that impacted the wall and exploded into hundreds of bubbles."

"Success," Ollivander said cheerfully. "I daresay that you found your wand, Mr. Potter."

"Thank you, sir. No warnings about how my wand is the brother wand of Grindelwald, right?" Harry asked causing Nathan to smile slightly.

"No, I'm afraid not," Ollivander replied. "That will be fourteen Galleons, Mr. Potter."

First Impressions

King's Cross, (Sept. 1st)...

"Really, Mum, we'll be fine," Harry placated his mother for what seemed like the hundredth time.

"My boys have grown up," Lily said with a teasing smile on her face.

"Come on Lily, they're going to miss the train if we keep standing here outside the platform," James said.

"I know that, James, but it's not every day that Harry and Nathan start Hogwarts, and you're the one who said we should arrive late to avoid being mobbed."

"They won't be able to go to Hogwarts if they miss the train," James muttered. "I doubt we'll get mobbed now. Nathan has his hat on, and most the kids are probably already on the train."

"Fine. Let's go, boys. You remember how to get onto the platform?" Lily asked.

"Just walk through the barrier, Mum. I've been waiting for years to go to Hogwarts, and we've seen at least eight families already go ahead of us," Harry said somewhat impatiently.

"Yeah, let's go before Harry goes crazy at the thought of not seeing the Hogwarts library," Nathan teased.

"It's funny that you're laughing now, Nathan," Harry smirked, "because I didn't see you laughing after we got our wands and you couldn't stop a single one of my jinxes from hitting you."

"I'm sorry that I actually have a life and don't just practice wand movements and spells for hours on end," Nathan shot back.

"Oh, that's right, I'm sorry," Harry said sarcastically, "I forgot that your ability to lose to Dad at Quidditch means you have a life and I don't."

"Enough! Now boys, let's go one at a time," Lily said, gesturing towards the barrier.

Harry quickly grabbed his trunk and made his way to the other side of the barrier, and a few moments later he was joined by his brother and parents.

"I just don't understand how none of the Muggles ever notice," Nathan commented.

Rolling his eyes, Harry said, "It's called a Notice-Me-Not charm for a reason, genius."

"OK, that's enough," James snapped as Nathan opened his mouth to respond to Harry's taunt. "You boys are going to have to watch out for each other at Hogwarts, so don't start off on a bad foot."

“Sorry Dad.”

“Yeah, sorry.”

“Good. Now both of you have a good term, and we’ll see you at Christmas,” James said before hugging both of his children.

“Yes, and don’t you dare forget to write,” Lily said tearfully as she gathered her sons into a large hug. “I want to know how you’re first day goes, what house you are sorted into, and everything else that happens to you.”

After a few more goodbyes, Harry and Nathan finally were able to get away from their teary-eyed parents and made their way onto the Hogwarts Express.

“That took forever,” Harry said as he struggled to lift his trunk onto the train before helping his brother with his.

“Yeah, you’d think they would never see us again or something,” Nathan complained. “Let’s find a compartment close by, I don’t want to lug this trunk all over the train.”

“I know what you mea...wait, what’s wrong with us,” Harry said, shaking his head and then tapping both of their trunks with his wand.

Nathan’s eyes widened as he was now able to lift his trunk without any problem. “How?”

“Feather-Light Charm,” Harry explained. When his brother continued to look at him, he said, “It’s in the seventh chapter of our Charms book.”

“Is there anything you don’t know already? Why are you even going to Hogwarts?” Nathan teased.

“Prat,” Harry said with a smile as the two boys made their way down the train looking for an empty compartment.

“Oi, Fred, look! Lost firsties!”

“They seem to be getting smaller every year, don’t they?”

Harry and Nathan turned around to see two grinning redheads approaching them. Nathan instinctively lowered his hat to cover his scar.

“We’re not lost,” Harry told the twins. “You’d have to be pretty dumb to get lost on a train.”

“George, he’s a smart one. Let’s introduce him to our dearest brother,” the first twin said.

“Oh yes, Fred, a capital idea. Ronald could use some smarting up anyway,” George replied before grabbing Harry and his trunk. The redhead looked a little surprised at the weight of the trunk before ignoring it and practically dragging Harry down the hallway. After a brief walk, he opened a door and guided Harry into the compartment. A moment later, Fred appeared tugging Nathan into the compartment that, Harry noticed, had another red haired boy sitting in it.

“Ronald, we brought you some company!”

“Yes, now you don’t have to sit all by your lonesome.”

“Now play nice boys, and don’t make us come back here for any trouble making.”

“Gits,” Ron yelled at his brothers as they left and closed the compartment door behind them. “Um, I’m sorry about them. Fred and George can be a real pain.”

“Yeah don’t worry about it, I know how brothers can be,” Nathan smirked.

“Funny,” Harry said dryly as he levitated his trunk next to Ron’s.

“Wow,” Ron said as he watched Harry levitate his trunk effortlessly, “Are you a second year?”

"No, we're both first years," Nathan commented when he saw that his brother wasn't about to respond. "Harry just has had nothing better to do for the past few years than study magic"

Ron's eyes widened. "Your parents let you learn magic already? You're so lucky. Oh, I'm Ron by the way, Ron Weasley."

Harry and Nathan shared a brief look before Harry nodded slightly, they'd have to admit who they were eventually. "Harry Potter, and did you know you've got a smudge on your nose?"

Ron blushed and tried to rub his nose a little before Harry's words seemed to hit him. "Wait did you say Potter?"

"Yes, hi, I'm Nathan Potter," Nathan said hesitantly as he took off his hat, revealing his lightning bolt scar.

"Wow," Ron said reverently as he shamelessly stared at Nathan's scar.

Harry couldn't help but roll his eyes in annoyance at Ron. If he was indicative of how the Hogwarts population was going to treat his brother...well, it was going to be a long year.

"So, Ron," Nathan said a little awkwardly. "You play Quidditch at all?"

That seemed to snap Ron out of his daze. "Do !! I love Quidditch, I've been a Cannons supporter for my entire life..."

Harry couldn't help but shake his head as Ron began singing the praises of the Chudley Cannons while Nathan began arguing for the Pride of Portree. Harry could tell that the two would be obsessing about Quidditch for a while so he levitated his trunk down, removed a book on transfiguration, and ignored any attempt by Nathan or Ron to bring him into their Quidditch conversation.

As the countryside began to pass, there was a knock on the compartment, and the door opened revealing a bushy-haired girl. "Excuse me, but have you seen a toad?" the girl asked as she

practically dragged another boy into the compartment with her. "Neville lost his."

Nathan looked up from his conversation with Ron. "No, sorry, haven't seen one."

The girl seemed oblivious to Nathan's response, though, as her eyes were locked onto Harry, who was waving his wand in a circle and making the occasional jabbing motion.

"Ooooo are you doing magic?" she asked before sitting down across from Harry. "Well let's see it!"

Harry looked at the slightly rude girl before a smirk crossed his face. Turning to face Ron, Harry jabbed his wand at the boy. "Pingo Orange." The spell shot out of his wand and struck Ron, turning his skin bright orange. "There now you look like a true Cannons supporter."

Ron looked horrified at his now-orange skin and angrily took out his wand. "Turn me back," he demanded.

"Harry, turn him back," Nathan said seriously, "that's not funny."

"Fine, but only if you two promise to cut out the Quidditch babble, it's been hours already, and Ron, the Cannons are horrible, everyone knows that," Harry said as he raised his wand. "Finite."

Ron immediately turned back to normal and looked ready to explode in anger. Harry wasn't sure if it was because of the jinx or because he had mocked the Cannons – probably both.

Before Ron could launch into a tirade, however, the girl spoke up. "I've never seen that spell before. I've tried a few spells at home and they've all worked for me. I'm Hermione by the way, Hermione Granger."

"Harry Potter."

“Are you really?” asked Hermione. “Any relation to Nathan Potter, The Boy Who Lived?”

Harry jabbed his thumb at Nathan. “That would be the illustrious savior right there.”

Nathan scowled at Harry before saying hello to Hermione and a completely stunned Neville.

“You're really Nathan Potter! Did you know you're in Modern Magical History and The Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts?”

Once again Harry found himself tuning out the banter. He'd read both books the girl was talking about and found them to be lacking in any sort of validity. Honestly, they didn't even mention that Nathan had a brother.

Neville and Hermione left to go looking for Neville's toad again after a brief conversation about the Hogwarts houses. Harry was actually going to contribute to that conversation before Nathan had jumped in and proclaimed him to be a future Ravenclaw without giving him a chance to offer his opinion. He had glowered at his brother, but refrained from commenting on Nathan's insightful comments.

As the train ride continued and it began to get dark, the door once again opened. It took Harry one look between the pale faced boy that had just entered and his brother to let him know that nothing good was going to come of this meeting. With a jab of his wand, Harry sent a stream of sparks at the boy causing him to jump backwards into the hallway, knocking over the two other boys who were apparently planning on following him into the compartment. Harry then quickly stood up, closed the door, and locked it with a quick Colloportus.

“Know him already?” Harry asked his clearly upset brother.

“Yeah,” Nathan said angrily, “I met the ponce in Diagon Alley.”

“Who is he?” Ron asked.

“Draco Malfoy. I was in disguise, and he kept going on and on about how superior he was because of his family.”

“I know that name,” Ron growled. “My dad doesn't like Mr. Malfoy at all.”

As Ron and Nathan began talking about how they couldn't wait to learn how to curse Draco, Harry shook his head and went back to reading. It wasn't like he needed a class to learn how to curse people; he'd been subtly cursing Nathan since he got his wand –not that his brother noticed a lot, Nathan probably just assumed he'd been extremely accident-prone or unlucky during the month of August.

Hogwarts, Great Hall

Harry couldn't help but marvel at everything around him. The charms on the ceiling, the ghosts, the countless suits of armor, and the talking portraits were beyond what he imagined they would be. Sure, he had read about everything in *Hogwarts: A History*, and his parents and uncles had told him countless stories about Hogwarts, but seeing it all was truly amazing.

The Sorting Hat's song was interesting, and he briefly wondered if it had to come up with a new song each year. He looked up at the staff table and saw his pseudo-grandfather, Albus Dumbledore, looking proudly at each new student. Harry briefly caught the headmaster's eye, and he was certain that Dumbledore winked at him just before Assistant Headmistress McGonagall called out the first name to be sorted.

Harry recognized several names that his parents had mentioned. Abbott, Bones, and Davis were among the most notable that Harry remembered. Harry was briefly surprised that he and his brother weren't the only twins in their year. After Padma Patil was sorted into Ravenclaw and her sister Pavarti went into Gryffindor, McGonagall looked at her list of names and called out, “Potter, Harry.”

Harry took a bold step forward, knowing that the whispers around the hall were more than likely about him and his brother. The last thing he

heard before the hat fell over his eyes was one particularly classless Hufflepuff saying, "I didn't know the Potters had two kids."

"Hmmm, just what do we have here?" a disembodied voice asked.

"Hello?" Harry asked tentatively. "Hat?"

"Quite the mind you have, Mr. Potter, but you also have a great thirst to prove yourself. Yes, you fear the world will always see you as the brother of The Boy Who Lived. You wanted to prove yourself better than your brother..."

Harry bristled angrily. "I don't want to be better than Natha—"

"Please, Mr. Potter, you can not lie to me. Besides, it's not wrong to seek greatness, and you do seek greatness, Mr. Potter, there is no doubt about that. I've sorted many children, but only a handful ever held themselves to the same supererogatory standard you seem to set for yourself. Now, where do I put you, hmm?"

"Gryffindor?" Harry asked.

"Is that what you want, Mr. Potter? To be a Gryffindor?"

Harry paused. It was always Nathan's desire to be the perfect Gryffindor like their father, but did he really want to be a Gryffindor?

"Your silence answers my question. Now, while you initially started studying to try and prove yourself an equal to your brother, you developed a love and talent for magic that I have rarely seen in someone your age. Yes, it's quite clear you belong in...RAVENCLAW!"

The hat was quickly removed from Harry's head, and he looked up to see Professor McGonagall give him a small smile as the table furthest to the left exploded in cheers. Harry immediately set off for the Ravenclaw table as McGonagall called, "Potter, Nathan."

As everyone at the Ravenclaw table began trying to shake his hand and congratulate him, Harry did his best to watch his brother when

the hat was placed on his head. Judging by the way Nathan was grabbing the stool and muttering to himself, it appeared his brother was having a very intense conversation with the Sorting Hat. After almost a minute had passed, the hat's brim opened and proclaimed Nathan a "GRYFFINDOR!"

Harry couldn't help but clap with the rest of the hall as Nathan made his way over to the Gryffindor table. Harry knew Nathan had practically modeled himself after their father for some time, and that it had been his brother's dream to end up in Gryffindor just like their dad.

As Blaise Zabini was placed into Slytherin, ending the Sorting, Harry smiled. He was finally at Hogwarts with his brother. This year was going to be great.

A/N:

This story will have long chapters (10-15K words) and will move at a fast pace.

This will be a Dark!Egghead!Harry story. But don't fear, Harry's not just going to spend the entire story reading a book. That would be very, very boring.

Reviews make me smile. Smiling makes me happy. Being happy makes me forget about my Senior Thesis. Not working on my Senior Thesis frees up more time for writing Hpfanfiction. So, QED, more reviews = quicker update rate. I won't do anything crass like hold back updates because of a lack of reviews (that's really stupid), but I will give you readers a logical reason to leave a review in the first place.

Big thanks to Stanzi for doing the beta work.

Chapter 2

Hogwarts Fall

The Morning After

Ravenclaw Common Room, (Sept. 2nd)...

“Hey, Potter, wake up.”

Harry stirred slightly in his comfortable four-poster bed and opened his eyes. Standing just outside of the curtains was the figure of Terry Boot, his fellow year mate in Ravenclaw. A quick look at his watch told Harry that it was just past seven.

“Potter, Michael and I are going to breakfast, and Anthony and Stephen are already in the shower. You’d better hurry up or you’re going to be late,” Boot said before walking out of the first year dormitory.

Harry grunted his acknowledgment and slowly got up. After the welcoming feast, the fifth year Ravenclaw prefect, Penelope Clearwater, had taken the first years up to Ravenclaw tower, which was located on the west side of Hogwarts. Once outside the entrance to the Ravenclaw common room, the group of first years had to answer a riddle from a knocker to gain entrance. Prefect Clearwater hadn’t bothered to help them, saying that it was better they learn to answer the riddles on their own merit. It had taken a while but eventually Harry and Su Li came to the answer at the same time, and everyone was given access to Ravenclaw tower.

The Ravenclaw common room was in the shape of a gigantic circle and had huge armchairs that looked big enough to seat at least three first-years. The ceiling of the common room was a gigantic dome and had moving constellations painted on it. A passing sixth year said that the constellations always matched the constellations that would be present above Hogwarts every night, and that the common room ceiling was an excellent study aide for Astronomy.

While the common room was truly mesmerizing, Harry thought that the most impressive thing was the replica statue of Rowena Ravenclaw wearing her signature diadem. The statue stood at the head of the common room between the two staircases leading up to the boys' and girls' dormitories, and its placement gave the impression that Lady Ravenclaw was always watching over her students as they studied.

After a very quick shower and change of clothes, Harry managed to find his way to the Great Hall from the Ravenclaw tower without getting lost. At half eight, the Great Hall didn't seem to have many guests, aside from a nearly full Ravenclaw table, and Harry quickly took a seat next to Anthony Goldstein and Michael Corner.

"Where is everyone else?"

"Weren't you paying attention last night when Clearwater told us that most other Houses are lazy and don't come down to nearly half nine on the first day?" Stephen Cornfoot asked.

"No, I guess I missed that," Harry said sheepishly.

"Yeah, I was pretty tired from the feast as well, but you were out like a light the second we got to our dorm," Anthony Goldstein said while placing several pieces of sausage on his plate.

"Well you didn't have to be up at dawn to make sure your brother had his disguise in place and his alternate identity ready so that our family didn't get mobbed trying to get to platform 9 and three-quarters," Harry said jokingly.

The silence that descended around Harry made him pause halfway through eating a piece of ham and look up. He was slightly surprised to see every single one of his year mates gaping stupidly at him.

"So...what's it like, you know, living with the Boy-Who-Lived?" Terry Boot asked reverently.

Harry shook his head ruefully. "He's my brother –"

“I bet he knows tons of magic already of course,” Michael Corner interjected.

“Yeah, he stopped You-Know-Who. Was he getting private training from the Headmaster for your entire life?” asked Goldstein.

“What? Private lessons?” Harry asked, completely flabbergasted. “No, we didn’t get any training from Professor Dumbledo—”

“Well, maybe not you,” Lisa Turpin said sympathetically, “but surely Nathan did, right?”

Harry started to get upset. Did these people honestly think his parents would raise Nathan as some kind of super wizard and throw him to side without a second thought?

“Maybe they didn’t tell you,” Corner said, “so you wouldn’t get jealous—”

“No one gave Nathan any special training,” Harry snapped. “It’s not like Nathan is the second coming of Merlin or something.”

Harry was less than pleased to see that he was now the target of several disbelieving looks from not only his year mates, but several older Ravenclaws, who had been eavesdropping. Slightly upset at the blatant idiocy of his peers, Harry stood up and quickly left the Great Hall. He’d find Professor Flitwick and get his schedule from his Head of House personally; he didn’t want to be around a bunch of people who only wanted to talk about his brother anyway.

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An Opportunity Missed

Hogwarts Library, (Sept. 10th)...

A loud thump echoed slightly in the previously silent Hogwarts library. The result of the noise was a frustrated Harry Potter, who had just

tossed his first year Transfiguration book off the large oak table at which he was seated. Harry never thought he'd say this, but he was bored. His first year books were nearly identical to the books his mother had when she was at Hogwarts, and he'd finished reading those well before his tenth birthday!

The only book that seemed to be different was his book on Potions, and as much as Harry had enjoyed his mother's lessons, he liked wand magic much more than brewing. That wasn't to say, however, that he wasn't good at Potions. He knew he impressed Professor Snape during his first Potions lesson. The Professor had asked him several challenging questions as soon as class started, and Harry correctly answered every singly one, earning ten points to Ravenclaw for knowing about Potions that weren't even mentioned in the first year curriculum.

While Professor Snape awarding him points seemed to increase the respect the upper-year Ravenclaws had for him, Harry didn't have any friends yet. In fact, Harry found that his stellar academic performance was pushing him further away from his dorm-mates, who now seemed to shift between jealousy and awe around him. Not that Harry wanted to be friends with a bunch of idiots who were obsessed with his brother anyway. He was confident he'd find some friends who actually looked passed his last name eventually.

After picking up his book, Harry made his way up to Madam Pince, the librarian. "Hello, ma'am," he said politely. "You wouldn't happen to have an extra copy of the second year Charms book would you?"

Madam Pince smiled at Harry; she'd taken a liking to him after he had asked her to explain the different sections of the library on his first full day at Hogwarts. "Yes Harry, I do. Are you sure you want to read a second year book though? It's only your first week."

"I'm sure, ma'am. I've already finished the first year book."

Madam Pince nodded her head. While it was generally frowned upon to teach children any magic before they go to Hogwarts, that hadn't stopped generations of purebloods from trying to give their children

an edge before starting school. As such, it came to no surprise to Madam Pince that the young boy in front of her had already read a first year book.

“Very well, Harry,” she said. “You can keep this book for one week just like the last one. Let me know if you need to check it out longer, okay?”

“Yes, ma'am,” Harry said seriously as he put the book into his bag and quickly went back to his secluded table in the back corner of the library. He never saw a bushy-haired Gryffindor muggleborn enter a few minutes later to ask Madam Pince about the library and where to find certain books.

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Please Sir, May I Have Some More?

Charms Classroom, (Sept. 22nd)...

“Professor Flitwick, can I talk to you in private, sir?”

Flitwick looked up and smiled broadly. “Of course, Harry.” With a wave of his wand, the classroom door closed and locked behind the last first year student leaving the room. “Now what can I do for you?”

Harry shook his head at Professor Flitwick's casual, effortless display of silent magic. He had seen his Grandfather, Albus Dumbledore, and his mother use such magic, but he had only recently come to appreciate just how amazingly talented they really were. “Was that some kind of banishing charm to close the door?”

Flitwick's smile seemed to grow. “No, not quite, Harry. Once you get older you'll find that actual spells are not as important as the intent behind your magic. I suppose you could say I used a subtle banishing charm to close the door, but, in reality, I didn't use any specific spell. I simply desired the door to close behind the last student, and I used magic to fulfill my intent.”

“Sir, could you teach me how to do that?”

“Harry, you’re progressing amazingly well, but you are far from that kind of magic,” Flitwick chided with a smile. “Clearly you have inherited your mother’s gift with charms, but, trust me, silent and intent-driven magic is still a few years away for you.”

“No, well, sir, I didn’t mean that kind of magic exactly. I meant, well...I know a lot of what we do in class already.”

Flitwick seemed to appraise his young student for a moment. “I see. Your mother hinted in a letter that she had been teaching you and your brother some magical theory.”

“Since I was eight, sir,” Harry said quickly. “I’ve already read the entire first year book, and I’ve read an older edition of the second year Charms book as well. Do you think, you could, umm, maybe teach me some advanced charms?”

Flitwick shook his head sadly. “Harry, you’ve been at Hogwarts for less than a month. I know it all seems easy now, but trust me, it will get harder.” When it appeared Harry was going to protest, Flitwick continued. “Harry, I’ve been teaching for a long time. You aren’t the first student I’ve ever seen that has been taught at home and are a little ahead. While your marks are outstanding, so are your brother’s and several other purebloods. As your Head of House, I, more than anyone, appreciate your desire to learn more, but believe me when I say that your lessons will get more difficult.”

“That’s what Professor McGonagall said,” mumbled Harry.

“What’s that, Harry?” Flitwick asked. “You approached Minerva as well?”

“Yes, sir, and Professor Snape.”

“You asked Professor Snape,” Flitwick said with surprise. “And what did Professor Snape have to say?”

“To talk to him next year if I continue to show improvement,” Harry grumbled.

“Harry, that is quite a compliment, and you should feel proud. Professor Snape has not ever, to my knowledge, offered extra lessons,” Flitwick said, surprised at his usually surly colleague’s offer.

Harry did feel a little proud hearing that, but it still didn’t help him much. “Thank you for your time, Professor Flitwick, I should be heading to History of Magic now.”

“Yes, well, off you go then, best not to be late.” Flitwick was about to unlock the door when Harry casually waved his wand and said, “Alohomora,” before quickly walking out of the room.

“5 points to Ravenclaw, Mr. Potter,” Flitwick said to himself after Harry left. As Filius arranged his desk in preparation for his next class, he couldn’t help but reflect on everything he’d seen so far from Harry Potter. The boy’s work had been perfect. Not a point missed on a quiz, his essays were well written, and his practical work was flawless. Filius wasn’t kidding when he said that he had seen several students breeze through the first part of his class, but even he couldn’t remember a student who had never seemed to struggle on a single assignment. He’d have to keep a closer eye on Mr. Potter for the rest of the term.

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If At First You Don't Succeed

Empty Defense Classroom, (Oct 1st)...

“Engorgio,” Harry said jabbing his wand at a nearby desk. A blueish-green spell shot out of his wand and made contact with the desk; however, instead of causing the desk to grow, the spell caused the back of the desk to explode, showering the back wall with splinters of broken wood.

“Damn,” Harry cursed for what seemed like the tenth time. All around him were fragments of broken wood. Each and every deformed piece of furniture demonstrated the young man’s failure at properly casting the growth charm.

Going back to his open charms book, Harry made sure he was doing everything right. A clockwise swirl of the wand followed by a solid thrust forward while incanting the spell as in-gore-gee-oh. He was doing everything right! Why wasn’t the spell working?

Closing the book, Harry turned to face one of the few remaining desks. With a clockwise swirl, followed by a sharp jab forward, Harry angrily snapped out, “Engorgio.”

This time the spell’s color was a tad bit bluer, and when it made contact with the piece of furniture, the desk shook for a moment before violently exploding. Harry had to dive behind the teacher’s desk to avoid several large pieces of flying debris from hitting him.

Muttering about doing everything the book said, Harry was prepared to give up for the day when he heard the sound of clapping coming from behind him. Reluctantly turning around, Harry found himself staring at Professor Quirinus Quirrell, the resident Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher.

Harry hung his head. Not only did he completely fail at mastering the growth charm, but now he was likely to have his first detention for damaging school property and using magic in an unsupervised classroom.

“Q-q-qu-uite the explosion, Mr. P-P-Potter,” Quirrell said with his usual stutter, “I am a little s-s-surprised t-t-t-t-to see all the damage you’ve d-done. S-s-surely you didn’t do all this with one sp-sp-spell?”

“No, sir,” Harry said realizing the futility in lying since he was caught red handed. “I had a silencing charm on the room, and I’ve been practicing for an hour or so.”

Quirrell seemed slightly surprised. "I wa-wasn't aware that s-s-silencing charms were f-f-f-first year spells."

Harry shrugged. "I guess I'm a little ahead."

"And what caused all this?" Quirrell asked, gesturing to all the destroyed property.

"An engorgement charm," Harry said, embarrassed at his inability to properly cast the spell.

Quirrell paused for sometime, as if debating something within himself, before saying, "Show me." With a wave of his wand, all the broken desks quickly fixed themselves. Quirrell then levitated one desk away from all the others and gestured for Harry to cast the spell.

Stepping forward, Harry perfectly demonstrated the wand movement and incantation for the engorgement charm. The spell left Harry's wand and impacted the desk, causing it to shake momentarily before violently exploding.

Harry, once again, found refuge behind the teacher's desk, but Quirrell simply raised a shield and allowed the pieces of wood to impact it. "A g-good a-attempt, Mr. Potter," Quirrell admitted, "but do you know w-what y-you did wrong?"

Harry came out from behind the teacher's desk with a scowl on his face. "No. I did the wand movement right, and I know I'm saying the spell correctly."

"True."

"So what am I doing wrong?" Harry demanded. "It should work."

"W-what is th-the most important rule of m-m-m-magic?" Quirrell asked.

After a long pause, Harry reluctantly said, "I--I'm not sure."

“Intent,” Quirrell said sharply. “You need to visualize the desk growing, becoming larger. Without intent, your magic is unfocused and chaotic.”

“Intent,” Harry muttered to himself as he recalled what Flitwick had told him about not needing a specific spell to close his door. “Alright, intent. I can do this.”

Harry turned his attention on an isolated desk in the corner of the room. “Engorgio,” he said focusing on the desk becoming larger. The spell impacted the desk and it began to shake, but this time the desk grew several feet until it was large enough to easily seat Hagrid.

“Congratulations, Mr. Potter.”

“Thank you, sir,” Harry said very proud at his achievement. “Um, sir, I’m not in trouble, am I?”

“No,” Quirrell said after giving Harry an uncharacteristically piercing look.

“Sir,” Harry called out as Quirrell made to leave the room, “sir, if you wouldn’t mind, um, well, what I mean to say is...if you have the time, sir, do you think you could teach me?”

“I am already teaching you, Mr. P-P-Potter,” Quirrell said somewhat sarcastically.

“No, well, yes sir,” Harry said. “But I meant in private. Just the two of us. I asked Professors Flitwick, McGonagall, and Snape, and they all said I’m too young, but I –”

“Mr. Potter, you are a f-f-f-first year.”

“I can do it,” Harry said sharply. “That was a third year charm, and I managed to cast it.”

“Only with my help,” Quirrell said with a small grin.

“Well, I suppose that's true, but I still did it. Please, sir? I'll learn anything you want to teach me, please?” Harry practically begged.

Quirrell peered at Harry for sometime before he closed his eyes in deep thought. Slowly, he began to nod his head. “Very well, Mr. Potter, but you will do exactly as I say. Understood?”

Harry couldn't keep the large smile off his face as he nodded his head. Quirrell might not be the best teacher in the school, but he clearly knew a bit about magic. Besides if Quirrell turned out to be a bad teacher, he could always just go back to learning on his own.

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Do Your Homework...or Else!

Defense Against the Dark Arts Classroom, (Oct. 10th)...

“Move, Potter,” Quirrell demanded as he sent another jinx at the increasingly tired boy.

Harry once again felt himself regretting asking Quirrell for help. This was the second time he'd had a lesson with his Defense Professor, and it seemed like Quirrell took a perverse pleasure out of cursing him senseless.

As a puke yellow spell passed over his head, Harry again dove out of the way and momentarily took refuge behind a desk. During his first lesson, Quirrell said he would learn how to counter spells being cast at him.

Unfortunately for Harry, because of his professor's stutter, Quirrell almost always used silent magic. Since he couldn't tell from the incantation, Harry was forced to identify spells by the colour, the speed at which the spell traveled, and his professor's wand movement. Needless to say that was more than a little bit difficult when he was constantly dodging unfriendly spells.

“R-R-R-Reducto,” Quirrell said.

Harry immediately fled from behind the desk. Quirrell rarely, if ever, used incantations, but when he did, it was too give Harry a heads up for when he was using a more dangerous curse. In this case, Harry recognized the spell as a blasting curse usually taught to fourth years.

Harry didn't know what the counter-curse to that specific spell was, but when the spell struck the desk he was just moments ago hiding behind, causing it to explode, Harry made a mental note to look it up as soon as possible.

Another comment Quirrell had made during their first lesson was that he wasn't there to teach Harry spells, incantations, or even to give him a hint as to the type of magic he should be learning. Rather, Quirrell would put Harry in situations where he would have to adapt and decide what would be best magic to help him.

By sending spell after spell at Harry in a crowded room, Quirrell was encouraging him to not only to learn jinxes, hexes, and curses, but also providing motivation for him to use Transfiguration and Charms in order to protect himself. This led to Harry spending many nights in the library, usually until it closed, reading books on Charms and Transfiguration.

“St-st-stupefy,” Quirrell said a moment after Vanishing the desk Harry was hiding behind, knocking the boy unconscious.

After casually walking over and smiling victoriously at the fallen form of Harry Potter, Quirrell picked up the boy's wand and woke him up.

With a slight groan, Harry opened his eyes to see his Professor casually standing over him.

“What d-d-did you learn?” asked Quirrell.

“I need to learn the counter for the blasting curse,” Harry said, “and what was that last spell?”

“St-st-stunning spell. Incantation is ‘St-stupefy,’” Quirrell replied after returning the boy’s wand.

“Stupefy,” Harry repeated, committing the spell to memory.

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Brothers Stick Together?

Hogwarts Library, (Oct. 17th)...

Sitting in his familiar back table in the library, Harry glanced at the books on Charms, Defense, and Transfiguration that were spread out all around him. Had any of his professors walked by, they would have been slightly concerned at the intense look of concentration and the ever-growing list of incantations the young man was writing down.

“Hey Harry, long time no see.”

Harry looked up and smiled as Nathan walked over. His smile faded slightly when he saw Ron Weasley following his brother like a lost puppy.

Harry hadn’t seen much of his brother since coming to Hogwarts. The Gryffindors and Ravenclaws didn’t share any classes together, and it was generally frowned upon to sit with anyone other than one’s housemates at meal times. Also, the fact that Nathan had somehow managed to do the impossible by getting placed onto the Gryffindor Quidditch team as a first year meant a lot of his time was now spent at practice. As such, Harry had only sporadically spoken to his brother, and whenever he had been able to talk to Nathan, Ron Weasley was always present at his brother’s side.

Not that Harry had any major problem with Ron; he was a decent enough bloke. Still, Harry was getting slightly annoyed that every time he wanted to hang out with his brother or share some of the problems he had been having since coming to Hogwarts, Ron was always there tagging along.

“Nathan, I’m surprised to see you in a library,” Harry quipped.

Nathan smiled. “I’ve come here to rescue you from yourself, Harry. Come on, Ron and I are going to go explore the castle. These books,” he said, motioning to the massive stack surrounding his brother, “can wait.”

“No Nathan. Maybe another time.”

“Harry, come on. What is so important?” Nathan asked, grabbing the nearest book and looking at it. His eyes widened slightly as he read the title. “Why are you reading a third year Transfiguration book?”

“I am trying to figure out how to transfigure something, obviously,” Harry said evasively. Quirrell had told him that he was not, under any circumstances, to tell anyone about his extra lessons. Harry assumed that the man didn’t want it getting back to the other faculty that he was spending several hours a week cursing a student. Regardless of the fact that Harry had agreed to the lessons, and kept coming back for more, it wouldn’t look good for Quirrell if this news got out.

“Geez, you’re like a male Granger,” Weasley said with a smirk.

“I’m sorry I actually enjoy learning magic, Weasley,” Harry said defensively. He had seen Granger a few times in the library. He had even attempted to talk to her once. After the girl had snapped at him to leave her alone and that she wasn’t going to help him with his homework, Harry was rather insulted and hadn’t tried to approach her again.

“But Harry this is a third-year book, do you even understand this stuff?” Nathan asked, sounding a little bit impressed and taking a seat across from his brother.

“Some of it is over my head,” Harry admitted, “but Madam Pince gave me a good book on theory that has helped a lot. Do you want to read it?”

“Maybe,” Nathan said as he continued to flip through pages in the Transfiguration book.

“Nathan, not you too,” Ron whined. “Come on, we were going to explore the castle!”

Nathan looked between his brother and Ron for a second. “Well I did promise Ron we’d go exploring.”

“Go,” Harry said, trying not to sound bitter. “I’ll give you the book later.”

“Alright, I’ll see you later, Harry, don’t study too hard.” Nathan grinned. “I wouldn’t want your brain to explode.”

“Get out of here before you get me in trouble for being loud,” Harry said, enjoying the familiar banter with his brother.

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An Effort in Futility

Defense Against the Dark Arts Classroom, (Oct. 25th)...

Harry made a slashing motion across his body as he mumbled the counter curse to the hair loss hex Quirrell was about to send at him. The spell had just formed on the tip of Quirrell's wand when Harry's counter caused it to fizzle and disappear before it could be sent.

“Locomotor Mortis,” Harry snapped.

Quirrell batted the spell away with practiced ease.

A nonverbal stunning spell from Quirrell sent Harry diving to the floor. He still hadn’t mastered the counter-curse to stop the stunning spell, and he wasn’t able to generate the Protego shield that would let him block it.

“Petrificus Totalus,” Harry said from the floor, sending the spell at Quirrell’s legs.

A silver shield popped into existence around Quirrell, and Harry growled in frustration. While Harry now knew a few decent offensive spells, he had yet to even make his instructor move an inch. The man was simply standing at the front of the room with a gigantic smirk on his face.

Before Quirrell could send another spell, Harry sent a ball of blue fire at Quirrell’s robes. A casual flick from the professor’s wand caused the flame to freeze before it even came close to approaching him. Harry recognized the effects of the freezing charm as the now frozen ball of fire fell to the ground and cracked into several pieces when it hit the floor.

Several large, twisting ropes flew out of Quirrell’s wand, but after spending an entire lesson being tied up by the Incarcerusspell, Harry had made it a point to learn how to easily counter it. With a swish and flick of his wand, Harry levitated a nearby chair into the path of the ropes, causing them to harmlessly surround the chair. Harry then jabbed his wand at the chair and attempted to Banish it toward Quirrell.

The banishing charm, unfortunately, was slightly beyond Harry’s capabilities. Instead of flying at Quirrell, the chair caught fire and fell to the floor. Surprised at the unexpected and colossal failure of his spell, Harry wasn’t prepared to dodge a tripping jinx, and he fell to the floor. A moment later, he was Stunned.

A quick rennervate from Quirrell woke him up, and Harry was again aggravated at the stupid smirk that had yet to leave his professor’s face.

“N-n-n-not bad, P-Potter.”

Harry couldn’t tell because of Quirrell’s stutter, but he was fairly sure his teacher was being sarcastic.

“M-m-maybe next time you’ll g-g-g-get me to move.”

Yep. Quirrell was definitely being sarcastic.

“If that banishing charm worked, you would have had to move to avoid the chair,” Harry countered, hoping to prove that his strategy was good, even if he wasn’t quite capable of executing it.

Quirrell actually snorted as he twirled his wand and casually Vanished a nearby chair, demonstrating that he would not have been in nearly as much trouble as Harry claimed.

“What would you do if you were me then?” Harry challenged.

The only hint Harry had that Quirrell was about to cast a spell was the slight narrowing of his professor’s eyes, followed by the jabbing of his wand. Harry was surprised to see the spell was sent not at him, but rather a few feet in front of him at a fallen desk. The spell struck the desk and blew it to pieces, sending splinters right at Harry, who only narrowly was able to avoid it by diving to his left.

“You could have used an in-indirect attack or d-d-d-damaged the floor below my feet,” Quirrell commented as Harry picked himself up off the ground and prepared for yet another beating at the hands of his professor.

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YOU DID WHAT?

Great Hall, (Nov. 1st)...

“I heard he blasted it through a wall,” said Lisa Turpin.

“No, he transfigured it and then conjured a cage for it,” Su Li said adamantly.

Terry Boot shook his head. "My sister Michelle is a fourth year Gryffindor, and she said that it was actually a running battle through the corridors and that everyone in Gryffindor house could hear it."

"What is everyone talking about?" Harry asked as he took a seat at the Ravenclaw table for lunch.

"You don't know?" asked Padma Patil in shock.

"Know what?" Harry asked impatiently.

"Everyone's saying that your brother killed the mountain troll that broke into the castle last night! No one knows how exactly, but apparently there was a big fight and a bathroom got destroyed," Michael Corner explained.

"What?" Harry asked, dumbfounded. "There is no way Nathan could kill a mountain troll."

Harry was once again frustrated at the pitying looks that his fellow Ravenclaws sent at him. The fact that he constantly rebutted their theories that Nathan was some kind of Merlin-incarnate seemed to make his fellow Ravenclaws feel that he was jealous of his brother.

"Well, explain the points Gryffindor house got last night then? Plus, everyone in Gryffindor is talking about it," Mandy Brocklehurst said haughtily.

Harry was about to argue the intelligence of Gryffindor house as a whole when most of the Great Hall grew quiet, and everyone's head seemed to turn towards the doors. Reluctantly, Harry turned his head and saw his brother walk into the hall with Ron Weasley and, surprisingly, Hermione Granger next to him. The fact that all three of them were blushing told Harry that something had happened.

Sighing, Harry stood up and walked over to where his brother was sitting at the Gryffindor table. He didn't believe the rumors at all, but his brother's reaction coupled with the fact that there were rumors told him he needed to figure out what was going on.

Crossing the hall in a matter of seconds, he came to stand directly behind his brother. "We need to talk."

Nathan slowly turned around and let a bit of a sheepish grin cross his face. Before he could talk though, Hermione said, "You know, it's very rude to interrupt conversations."

Harry fixed the girl with his impression of Professor Snape's stare after a Hufflepuff ruined a Potion. When Granger shut up immediately, Harry knew that he had at least marginally succeeded in mimicking Professor Snape.

"Now, Nathan," Harry commanded impatiently.

Nathan slowly stood up and the two brothers quickly made their way out of the Great Hall. Harry led Nathan into an unused Charms classroom, and he immediately cast a silencing charm on the door before turning to face his brother.

"Okay, Nathan, explain."

"Well...you see, Harry, Ron had said some mean things to Hermione after Charms yesterday," Nathan started, "and she ran into a bathroom to cry."

"So Weasley is a jerk," Harry said sounding unimpressed. "Get to the point where you are doing battle with a Troll."

Nathan looked slightly angry at Harry's description of Ron, but he ignored it and pressed on with the story. "Well after Quirrell warned everyone in the Great Hall last night, Ron and I remembered Hermione and we went to warn her."

"And I suppose this is when you ran into it in the hallway and had this running battle that everyone is talking about?"

"Um...no. We sort of, accidentally, locked the troll in the bathroom with Hermione," Nathan said sheepishly. "We immediately went back

to help after we realized what we did, but Hermione was a little freaked out to find herself locked in a room with a Mountain Troll.”

“Since Granger isn't dead or in the hospital wing, I assume you were able to save her?”

Nathan quickly nodded his head.

“How?” Harry asked more curious than angry now.

“Ron was able to knock it out with his own club using the levitation spell.”

“That's...surprisingly smart of him. Maybe he isn't a total idiot after all,” Harry said more to himself than to Nathan. “I'm surprised that you didn't think of something to do first.”

“I did try to do something,” Nathan admitted.

“Oh?” Harry asked. “Troll skin is resistant to most spells, so any jinx or hex probably wouldn't have had an effect on it.”

“Yeah,” Nathan said, laughing somewhat uncomfortably, “Hermione mentioned that.”

“So what spell did you use?” Harry asked curiously.

“I didn't use a spell, I went with a...different approach.”

“What kind of different approach?” Harry asked narrowing his eyes dangerously.

“Istuckmywandupitsnose.”

“Excuse me,” Harry said, “Care to repeat that?”

“I said, I stuck my wand up its nose,” Nathan said before ducking, as if expecting Harry to hit or curse him.

Instead of hitting his brother, Harry had closed his eyes and was trying to eliminate the mental image of Nathan on the back of a Troll. Finally, he addressed his brother in an eerily calm voice. "You are, without a doubt in my mind, the luckiest person I have ever met. If you do anything that stupid again, you won't have to worry about detentions, losing house points, or the eventual Howler Mum would send because I'm telling you right now...I will kill you myself." Harry then shook his head one more time before walking out of the room, muttering about stupid brothers and needing a calming potion so that he wouldn't do something he might regret.

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The Dark Lord's Lesson

Defense Against the Dark Arts Classroom, (Nov. 10th)...

Harry knew this was his chance. Quirrell was Vanishing the birds Harry had sent at him and was slightly distracted. With a vicious jab of his wand, Harry cast Incendio, sending a stream of fire at the feet of his professor. Quirrell continued Vanishing the birds, and, to Harry surprise, ignored the fire at his feet. The fire engulfed Quirrell's robes and shoes, but the professor just stood there, seemingly immune to the inferno that was surrounding him.

As Harry looked on in awe, Quirrell slashed his wand across his body and sent a very menacingly looking orange and red spell that seemed to burn the air as it flew towards Harry. Having no clue what the spell did, Harry levitated a nearby desk into the path of the spell. The desk was instantly blown into several pieces, and the shards fell to the ground in front of Harry.

"Duro," Quirrell said pointing his wand at Harry's feet.

Harry danced out of the way of the spell, which impacted the stone floor and seemed to have no effect.

"Petrificu-"

Harry's spell was immediately countered by Quirrell before he could finish the incantation. A moment later, Quirrell conjured a large net and Banished it toward Harry.

The sheer size of Quirrell's net made dodging impossible for Harry. With a slash of his wand, Harry sent a cutting curse at the net; however, the net was unaffected by the spell and soon Harry found himself tangled in the cords, completely helpless.

"Accio," said Quirrell, summoning Harry's wand into his hand.

With a sigh, Harry looked up through the net at his the victorious professor.

"I suppose you have questions?" Quirrell asked.

"Why didn't my flame spell effect you?" Harry practically demanded.

Quirrell snorted. "Fireproof charms on my clothes."

"Why didn't my cutting spell work?"

"Impervius charm on the net made it resistant to simple cutting spells," Quirrell said as he Vanished the net and returned Harry's wand.

"How was I supposed to know that, though?" Harry asked. "I didn't even see you cast the Impervius charm after the net was conjured."

"There are ways you could have sensed the extra spell, but you are far to young to notice the subtle traces magic leaves. It takes years, if not decades, to learn." Quirrell paused a moment before adding, "So you couldn't have known."

"But if I couldn't have known, there is no way I could have stopped it," Harry said angrily.

Quirrell seemed to appraise Harry for a while. "You could have used a more powerful spell."

"Burnt it?" Harry asked curiously.

"If you know a powerful fire spell that tactic could have worked; however, the incendio and blue ball flame spells would have been repelled."

"But incendio and diffindo are the only powerful fire and cutting spells that are mentioned in my book."

"That doesn't mean more powerful spells don't exist," Quirrell said ominously.

"But I don't know any, and I just learned those spells."

"Sit," Quirrell commanded with some authority.

Reluctantly, Harry took a seat in a fairly battered up looking desk.

"What is the purpose of the spell diffindo?" Quirrell asked.

"To cut or to cleave," Harry replied verbatim from his charms book.

"Cut what though?" asked Quirrell.

Harry thought back to his book. "The book mentioned several uses. Cutting pieces of parchment..."

"Yes, yes, yes," Quirrell said waving him off. "It cuts simple things. It isn't a spell that is particularly powerful or dangerous. It wouldn't be taught to second years if it was. The spell I sent at you was a dueling spell. To cut that net, you would have needed to utilize a spell that was created for the purpose of being used in a duel."

"Um, sir, can't dueling spells sometimes be considered...dark?" Harry asked hesitantly.

Quirrell again seemed to appraise Harry for some time. "What is dark magic, Potter?"

"Any spell, potion, artifact, or magical creation whose purpose is to maliciously harm another," Harry replied with another text book answer.

"Only half right, Mr. Potter," Quirrell stated. "While a lot dark magic is designed to hurt people, the idea that the intent behind all dark magic is inherently malicious is ludicrous."

"But my father said tha— "

Quirrell held up his hand stopping Harry from speaking. "I am not going to argue with whatever your father told you, Harry. I am simply going to tell you what I know."

"I don't understand. Don't dark spells need to be fueled by...evil?" Harry knew he sounded stupid the moment the word 'evil' left his mouth.

Quirrell laughed. "No, and I'll prove it to you. Tell me, when you used the cutting curse, what was your intent?"

"To cut," Harry said obviously.

"Exactly," Quirrell said. "If you were to use a dark cutting curse, the intent behind the spell would be the same, a desire to cut. The only difference would be the power of the spell. If it is evil to use a dark cutting curse, it must also be evil to use the spell diffindo since they share the same intent behind the spell. Do you understand what I'm saying Harry?"

"Sort of," Harry said slowly. "You're saying that while some curses are considered dark, they aren't really bad to use since other spells require you to have the same intent behind them in order to work?"

“Good, you do understand. There really is no good or evil in magic, only varying levels of power,” Quirrell said with a smile on his face. “A lot of dark magic is considered wrong because it has tremendous potential to be more powerful and dangerous, not that the spell itself is bad.”

“So, it’s not wrong to use a dark spell in some cases?” Harry asked. “So if you sent that net at me again, I could have use a dark spell to avoid it, and it wouldn’t be a bad thing to do?”

Quirrell nodded, pleased that Harry had come to that conclusion.

“What spell would you have used to cut through the ropes then?” Harry asked curiously.

A very sinister smile slowly spread across Quirrell’s face at the question. “There are many powerful severing or slashing spells that would have been good. For example...”

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Manipulation of the Worst Kind
Hogwarts Library, (Nov. 21st)...

Five Ravenclaw first years sat around their table in the corner of the library.

“Can you believe the essay Professor Snape gave us?” Lisa Turpin complained. “Three feet on the dangers and uses of swelling solutions!”

“I know. All because that Hufflepuff spilled his Potion,” Terry Boot said angrily. “I still need to do McGonagall’s essay on Gamp’s First Law of Elemental Transfiguration. I can’t believe Snape gave us all that work.”

“Not all of us,” Su Li said smugly.

“Just because you were lucky enough to be paired with Potter during the first Potions class doesn’t mean you are a decent brewer, Su,” Mandy Brocklehurst said irritably.

“Yeah, does Potter even let you touch the cauldron? All I ever see is you chop stuff for him,” Michael Corner mocked.

Su blushed. “It’s not my fault! Potter doesn’t follow the directions on the board. He knows some sort of trick to make the potion better, even Snape was impressed with out last potion.”

“Don’t you mean he was impressed with Potter,” Michael said cuttingly. “I suppose I would be great in Potion’s too if I didn’t have any friends and spent all my time alone in the library.”

“Michael, that’s mean, don’t say that,” Lisa chided.

“Whatever, Turpin, you’re the one who called him an antisocial loser last week,” Terry said quickly.

“Well...it’s not my fault he doesn’t talk to anyone,” Lisa said, defending her comment.

“Have you noticed that his brother doesn’t even hang out with him? Nathan’s always with Granger and Weasley,” Mandy said as a smirk crossed her face. “Of course he’s had to live with Harry for years, so you can’t really blame Nathan for ignoring him.”

“True. I bet Nathan can’t stand Harry.” Terry laughed. “Remember how he was so reluctant to talk to him after the troll thing? Harry practically had to drag Nathan out of the Great Hall.”

As the Ravenclaw first years continued to make fun of their classmate, Harry had heard enough. He left his eavesdropping spot behind a nearby bookshelf, put the book he was reading into his bag, and slipped out of the library. Without really paying attention to where he was going, Harry found himself standing outside of Professor Quirrell’s office. He’d spent a good deal of time with the Defense

teacher, and he couldn't help but feel comfortable around him. Raising his hand, Harry knocked a few times on the door and waited.

A few moments passed before the door opened and Professor Quirrell stood in the doorway looking confused. "Mr. Potter? We don't have a lesson today, do we?"

"Uh, no, sir, I was actually just wondering if I could read in your office?" Harry asked, knowing he probably sounded pathetic.

"Alright," Quirrell said, stepping to the side and letting Harry enter the small office.

Harry quickly sat down in a very comfortable chair in the corner of the office next to a rattling box..

"Ignore the boggart, Harry. I just c-c-c-caught it and will be letting my third years have a go at it," Quirrell explained.

Nodding his head, Harry ignored the shaking trunk. Sirius had told him about a boggart that used to haunt the Black family estate in London. When Sirius and his brother were younger, his mother had refused to banish the creature because she felt being reminded of their greatest fear would help her children build character.

Taking out his book, Harry quietly began to read as Professor Quirrell sat behind his desk grading papers. After an hour of silence –broken occasionally by the shaking boggart locked in the trunk–Professor Quirrell put down his quill. "So, Harry, are you going to tell me what's bothering you?"

Harry reluctantly looked up from his book and shrugged. "Nothing, sir."

"Harry," Quirrell said sounding insulted at the boldfaced lie.

"I just..." Harry said softly. "Well, sir, I've been excited about coming to Hogwarts my entire life. My dad told me and my brother all these great stories, and my mum would always say how much she loved it.

My uncles said it was some of the most fun they ever had, and Professor Dumbledore, whenever he would come over, used to tell me about all the different ways my dad got in trouble. Everything everyone said just made it sound so wonderful.”

Quirrell looked confused. “But?”

“I hate it here,” Harry admitted sadly as a tear fell from his face. “I hate that I can’t spend time with my brother as much anymore. I hate that everyone I meet is obsessed with asking questions about Nathan. I hate that everyone in Ravenclaw doesn’t like me or thinks I’m some kind of genius who can’t be approached. I thought I’d have friends, sir.”

“Well, Harry, I think that the solution is obvious,” Quirrell said calmly.

“What?” Harry asked, eagerly listening to his professor.

“Leave Hogwarts,” Quirrell replied. “Hogwarts isn’t the only school of magic in the world, Harry. Perhaps Beauxbatons or Durmstrang would suit you better. It would certainly get you out of the shadow of your brother.”

While Harry’s immediate reaction was to dismiss Quirrell’s idea, the more he thought about it, the more appealing it sounded. While some people might initially bug him about Nathan, without his brother’s presence they would eventually forget it and get to know him. But did he really want to leave Hogwarts?

“Beauxbatons is in the south of France on the Mediterranean,” Quirrell continued, seemingly oblivious to Harry’s concerns. “I’ve never been, but I’ve been told it’s quite beautiful. Only a handful of people who don’t go to Durmstrang know the school’s location, but since it’s required that the students all speak in German, the belief is that it is somewhere in Central Europe.”

Harry frowned. “But I don’t speak German or French.”

“Are you a wizard, Potter?” Quirrell asked sarcastically. “A spell can easily be cast on you so that you absorb a language much quicker than normal. You could learn German or French within a week. Personally, I think you would fit in better at Durmstrang. The school structure of Durmstrang is much different than Hogwarts.”

“Different how?” Harry asked. The only thing he knew about Durmstrang was that Sirius had mentioned his mother considered sending him there instead of Hogwarts, and that they supposedly taught the Dark Arts.

“Hogwarts, Harry, teaches a core set of classes to all its students for the first five years. The goal is to ensure that all students manage to achieve some level of competency with magic. It is very hard to fail out of Hogwarts. I believe the last student to have failed out was in the late 1890s,” Quirrell commented. “Durmstrang, on the other hand, is a school designed to benefit the gifted and powerful. They would rather produce five truly talented wizards than train fifty wizards of average ability like Hogwarts does. Because Durmstrang is geared towards only the top percent of students, the classes are more demanding, and students even have the option of moving ahead in year levels. There are also very few tests, quizzes, papers, or essays.”

“What?” Harry asked in confusion. “How do the teachers grade the students?”

“I don’t mean to say there aren’t any tests, there are a few. From what I understand, there are two easy ways to fail out of a class at Durmstrang. Students are given a list of spells or potions at the start of a term that they are expected to have mastered by the end of the year. Failure to demonstrate a command over the list can result in failing a class. The other, and much more likely, way to fail is during the student’s end of the year project. Instead of final exams, each student is expected to demonstrate a final project for each of their classes. The project is supposed to demonstrate the student’s competency over the magic taught in the class. If the instructor feels the student did not do a good job on the project, he has the option to make the student retake the class or fail him. Also, should you fail a

class at Durmstrang, you are unable to advance in that specific course subject.”

“But what if a teacher just doesn’t like me?” Harry asked, horrified at the thought of being failed because a teacher didn’t like him. “He could just say my project wasn’t good enough or—”

“Harry, Durmstrang caters almost exclusively to purebloods. As such, there have been instances of feuds between the families of some students and some teachers. In the late 17th century, it became mandatory to have all teachers at Durmstrang swear an Unbreakable Vow upon being hired. The oath forces the professors to accurately judge the validity of a student’s work.” Quirrell said calmly.

“But I’m not a pureblood,” Harry reminded his professor.

“Harry,” Quirrell said condescendingly, “You are the oldest son, and thus the heir to the House of Potter, your blood is pure enough for Durmstrang.”

“I--I’ll think about it, sir,” Harry said as he quickly stood up and left the room. Quirrell had given him a lot to think about, and he needed some time to figure out what he was going to do.

Inside Quirrell’s office, Voldemort slowly removed himself from control of Quirrell’s body, and he let the stuttering idiot retake command. As he rested in the back of Quirrell’s head, the Dark Lord made his plans. The boy would go to Durmstrang. He would make sure of it!

While he had initially told Quirrell to give the Potter boy lessons to try to gain some intelligence about the Potter family, Voldemort eventually came to see the potential the boy had. Harry Potter was bright, had a yearning to prove himself, and was desperately looking for friendship. The result was that the boy was very pliable, and Voldemort had easily manipulated him into learning some basic dark magic. It was nothing dangerous or impressive, but it didn’t have to be. Voldemort just needed to show young Harry Potter that practicing the Dark Arts wasn’t a vile act. The boy’s desire to learn would ensure that eventually he’d study more dangerous dark magic.

The opportunity to send Harry Potter to Durmstrang was also too good to pass up. If nothing else, it would drive a wedge between the boy and his family if the Potters refused to let him attend. If the mudblood and the blood-traitor did let Harry attend Durmstrang... well it would be a true test of the young man's commitment to becoming a great wizard. Durmstrang really was sink or swim for its students, but Voldemort was certain the boy could survive it.

While Harry Potter had ambition, there was a reason the boy was a Ravenclaw. More than anything else, Potter enjoyed learning and practicing magic. Voldemort had watched Potter improve dramatically from his first lesson, and Irma Pince had said in a staff meeting that the boy rarely left the library until it closed. Yes, Potter was a true Ravenclaw. If he went to Durmstrang, the boy would become firmly entrenched in the Dark Arts –if for no other reason than to pass his classes.

A light family like the Potters would never understand their son's need to learn the Dark Arts. They would misinterpret their son's desire to succeed academically, viewing it as him becoming a dark wizard. His family would turn on him eventually, and when they did, Voldemort would be there to offer the young man knowledge. Yes, knowing what he did about Harry Potter, Voldemort was certain that the boy would learn dark magic before failing at anything academically.

Slowly, a warped and twisted smirk appeared on the back of Professor Quirrell's head. The Dark Lord was pleased. Harry Potter would make a fine Death Eater someday.

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The Final Straw

History of Magic, (Dec. 3rd)...

Contrary to what most of Hogwarts believed, Ravenclaw house found History of Magic to be just as boring as the rest of the school did. The difference was that while the other houses complained about the

class or slept through it, the Ravenclaws either read their history book or spent the time working on assignments for other classes.

Currently Professor Binns was rambling on about how Ulrick the Awful instigated the Goblin Rebellion of 1523, but Harry Potter was not paying him even the slightest bit of attention. The reason behind the normally studious boy's distraction was the piece of parchment that sat in front of him. Charmed by Professor Quirrell to ensure that no one but Harry could read it, the parchment's title read, "Hogwarts & Durmstrang," and listed the pluses and minuses of both schools.

It had been over a week since Quirrell had suggested he transfer, and Harry was now very seriously considering it. He would miss his brother terribly if he left, but, as Quirrell had pointed out, he wasn't exactly able to spend a lot of time with Nathan at Hogwarts either, so what did it really matter if he went to Durmstrang.

The most attractive thing about Durmstrang was that he would be able to move ahead in year levels, and that the school actually encouraged students of all ages to study rare and powerful magic. Hogwarts would never let him jump ahead to a more challenging class; it just wasn't done. Not even Professor Dumbledore had been allowed to move ahead when he was at Hogwarts, and he was considered one of the most brilliant student Hogwarts had ever seen. Not to mention the fact that any rare magic at Hogwarts was locked away in the Restricted section of the library, and Harry would not only need a note from a Professor, but also a really good reason to get anything out of there. Professor Quirrell had said that Flitwick, McGonagall, Snape, and the other Professors wouldn't even entertain the notion of giving Harry a pass until after his fourth year.

"Hey Potter, what's a good reason to cast a cheering charm besides making someone feel better?" Anthony Goldstein asked.

"I don't know," Harry said, refusing to help the boy with the Charms essay that was due next period. Honestly, Ravenclaws were supposed to be smart. What was smart about ignoring an essay until the last minute?

“Come on, I know you know of some good ones,” Goldstein demanded. “I saw you in the common room last night writing it.”

“Well you're wrong,” Harry said, and, technically, Goldstein was indeed wrong. Harry had finished that essay the day after Flitwick assigned it. Last night he had been working on an essay Professor Snape had given out the day before.

“What's wrong with you?” Goldstein snapped. “If I don't get this done, Professor Flitwick will take points away and that will hurt the entire house.”

“Then you shouldn't have waited till the period before it was due to start it.”

“Potter, I'm almost done, I just need one more idea,” Goldstein pressed.

Harry simply ignored the boy and pretended not to hear Goldstein say, “No wonder you have no friends.”

Durmstrang was beginning to look more appealing by the second. This latest episode with Goldstein was the final straw. Harry wasn't about to help his fellow Ravenclaws pass their classes out of some misguided notion of house unity, and he knew he would probably be hated by the others because of it. He could already see Corner muttering next to Goldstein and both boys turned to glare at him. No doubt by the end of the day, his fellow year mates in Ravenclaw would hate him even more. Well, enough was enough. As soon as he was done with his classes, Harry would go talk to professor Quirrell and see what was necessary to put the process of transferring in motion.

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Professor Quirrell's Office, (Dec. 7th)...

Dear Highmaster Karkaroff,

Sir, my name is Harry James Potter, heir to the House of Potter, and I am currently a first year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. After a great deal of personal reflection, I have decided that I no longer wish to remain at this fine institution, and would like to seek other educational opportunities.

Professor Quinias Quirrell, my Defense Against the Dark Arts instructor, has told me a great deal about Durmstrang's curriculum, and I find myself greatly interested in your school. I understand that there is an established precedent for students transferring between Hogwarts, Beauxbatons, and Durmstrang, and I am interested in knowing if you would be amicable to receiving me as a potential transfer student.

If you would be willing to accept me as a candidate for transferring for the Spring 1992 term, please write back to Professor Quinias Quirrell with a positive response. Afterwards I shall consult my Head of House, Filius Flitwick, to have my first term grades sent to you so that you may make a fair decision in regard to my potential.

I thank you for your time, Highmaster.

Sincerely,

Harry J. Potter

House of Potter

“The letter looks good, Harry,” Quirrell commented.

“Do you think the Highmaster will accept me?” asked Harry, nervously.

“I believe he will,” Quirrell said. “I have also written a letter of recommendation for the Highmaster, and I will attach it to the same owl you send your letter with. Together, they should be enough to at least have Karkaroff accept you as a potential candidate. I'm sure that once he sees your first term scores he will have no choice but to let you attend Durmstrang.”

Harry smiled. "Thank you, sir. Not only for writing the letter of recommendation, but, well, for everything."

"It was my pleasure, Harry," Quirrell replied with a disarming smile. "Now I must go to Diagon Alley and pick up some supplies for my fifth year classes. I can mail both letters with an express owl while I am there if you would like."

"That would be wonderful, sir."

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Goodbye Hogwarts?

Filius Flitwick's Office, (Dec. 16th)...

"Mr. Potter, what are you doing here? I thought you were leaving for the holiday! The train is set to leave soon, is it not?" Professor Flitwick asked curiously.

"I am, sir, I just needed to speak with you quickly before I go," Harry said frantically.

"Oh, what about? Judging from how well you performed on my end of term test, you shouldn't be worried about your grades," Flitwick said good naturedly

"Well, sir, I suppose it is about my grades in a way."

Filius shook his head tiredly. As head of Ravenclaw house, he was use to students asking him immediately about their scores following their exams. "Harry, from what Minerva has told me, you have nothing to worry about in Transfiguration, and Professor Snape also said you had done acceptable work on his exam. Coming from Professor Snape, I assumed that to mean you were probably the best in your year."

“I, well...I know I did excellent on all my exams,” Harry said, trying not to sound cocky. “I wanted to ask you if you could send my transcript to someone.”

Filius raised an eyebrow in surprise. Typically, transcripts were only sent out when a student was seeking an apprenticeship, and Harry was far too young to even be considering such an option. “Why? And to whom?”

“Please send it to Highmaster Igor Karkaroff at The Durmstrang Institute of Magic,” Harry said honestly, “and as for why. Well, sir, I'm hoping to transfer there at the start of the spring term.”

Flitwick nearly fell out of his chair. “What!?”

“Please, sir, I'm running late as it is, and I need to make it onto the express to head home for Christmas. I just got a response from Highmaster Karkaroff a few minutes ago saying that he has accepted me as a potential transfer candidate, but he wants to see my first term grades. So can you please send the transcript once it's ready?” Harry asked.

“Mr. Potter, just tell me why you want to leave Hogwarts,” Filius said, horrified that one of his Ravens was even contemplating leaving.

“Sir...,” Harry said really not wanting to have this conversation with his Head of House. “I really do need to be going. The express leaves at eleven and it's already half past ten, and I still need to get to the station in Hogsmeade. Please promise me you'll send the transcript.”

“Harry,” Filius said, using his young pupil's first name for the first time. “I...I will send the transcript. I am bound as your Head of House to honor the request, but this conversation is not, by any means, over. Go if you must, but I will be writing you and your parents to discuss this over the holidays. Transferring is not something that should ever be considered lightly, and I'm honestly stunned that you did not come to me to ask questions about such a drastic move.”

“Thank you, sir, I'll look forward to your letter,” Harry said as he quickly left Flitwick's office. Placing a levitation charm on his trunk, Harry began to sprint out of the castle.

Reaching the train with only minutes to spare, Harry turned around and wondered if this would be the last time he would ever see the impressive castle.

“Goodbye, Hogwarts.”

A/N:

Will he stay or will he go? That and many other questions will be answered in the next riveting chapter of Harry Potter and the Boy Who Lived!

Chapter 3: “Choices” will probably be posted in three or four weeks.

Now, hit the review button and tell me what you think.

Chapter 3

Choices

How the Other Side Lives

Hogwarts Express, (Dec. 16th)...

A very excited Hermione Granger left the loo and started walking back towards her compartment. Her first semester at Hogwarts was over, but the school was more than she could have ever dreamed. The professors were knowledgeable, the magic incredible, the library was huge, and she had real friends for the first time in her life.

That wasn't to say that everything that had happened during the fall term was good. There were some low points. At first, most of her peers didn't like her. For the first two months of school they had made fun of her, calling her a bookworm or beaver. While the taunting was mean, it was something she had grown accustomed to in primary school. Coming face-to-face with a gigantic mountain troll, however, was not. Halloween was, without a doubt, both the most terrifying moment of her entire life, and, in retrospect, one of the best. It had led to her making friends.

As she passed several compartments, Hermione couldn't help but occasionally glance at the people inside. It was a compartment near the middle of the train that caused her to stop in her tracks. Sitting inside was... Nathan? She was about to open the door and ask what he was doing when she realized that Nathan would never slick his hair back or have his head buried in a book. It wasn't Nathan; it was Nathan's brother. But why was he sitting alone? Surely there were some Ravenclaws on the train that he could hang out with?

Truth be told, Hermione envied Harry Potter. She couldn't count the number of times she had felt alone in Gryffindor because no one understood her. She hated that she was surrounded by a bunch of people who just didn't appreciate the fact that she liked to learn new things. The Sorting Hat had wanted to put her into Ravenclaw; it was actually rather persistent that she would do well there, but Hermione had stubbornly said she wanted Gryffindor. In the end, she had found

a place in Gryffindor and now had good friends, but she had been very lonely for some time.

Harry Potter, on the other hand, had gone into Ravenclaw. She frequently saw him in the library studying or talking to Madam Pince about a book. No one ever seemed to make fun of him for spending time there though, and they certainly never hinted that it was wrong or weird for him to want to learn magic. It was as if being a Ravenclaw gave him a free pass to spend as much time as he wanted learning. Not even the Slytherins teased him. They didn't call him a bookworm or a brainiac. They just shrugged their shoulders and let him be. Harry Potter was a Ravenclaw, and it was expected of him to spend a lot of time in the library.

Stepping away from Harry's compartment door, Hermione resumed her walk towards her own compartment where Nathan and Ron were most likely chatting about Quidditch. That sounded about as much fun to Hermione as getting her teeth checked by her parents. Pushing the thought of Ron mindlessly spouting off some useless piece of trivia about the Chudley Cannons, Hermione found herself thinking again about Harry Potter. Nathan didn't talk about his brother a lot, but when he did it was usually with a smile on his face and about some fun thing they had done growing up together. It was clear that Nathan cared about Harry.

After Harry had dragged Nathan out of the Great Hall following the mountain troll fiasco, Hermione was worried that Harry was going to hurt Nathan. Harry did not look happy when he came over to talk to them, and Hermione admitted to herself that she probably didn't make the situation any better by being snappish towards him. Before they had become friends, she had overheard Nathan telling Ron once that Harry knew a lot of spells and curses before they even stepped foot into Hogwarts, and, naturally, Hermione was concerned for her new friend.

She had followed the two boys out of the Great Hall from a distance and watched them enter a classroom. Hermione had tried to listen in on the conversation from outside the door, but she wasn't able to hear a single word that was spoken. Not even muffled noises were coming from the other side of the door. Realizing that she might be

caught, Hermione had walked to the end of the hallway and waited. After a while, the door opened and Harry walked out shaking his head and looking less than pleased.

Once Nathan left the room, and didn't appear to have been cursed or hexed by his brother, Hermione asked him if everything was alright. Nathan had assured her that everything was fine, and that Harry took what had happened surprisingly well. Although after some questions, Nathan did admit that Harry had threatened to hurt him if he ever did something as stupid as shoving his wand up a troll's nose ever again.

As Hermione reflected, that was probably the only time she could think of at which she had seen Nathan and his brother interact for longer than a minute of two. As she entered her own compartment, her curiosity about Nathan and Harry's relationship was piqued.

“...so that's why I think the Cannons have a real shot next year.”

“Ron,” Nathan said, exasperated, “there is no way that the Cannons will ever get Gibbs to leave Puddlemere. They could offer him all the gold in Gringotts and he would never accept.”

“Are you two still talking about Quidditch!”

“Hermione, Quidditch is important,” Ron said seriously.

Refusing to be baited, Hermione turned to Nathan. “Can I ask you a bit of a personal question?”

“Umm, alright, I guess.”

“What's the deal between you and your brother?”

Nathan looked at her in confusion. “What do you mean?”

“Well, you don't really talk to him a lot, but you don't seem to dislike him or anything. So I guess I was just curious.”

"I...well, it's hard to spend time with him," Nathan said slowly as if only now realizing just how little he had seen of his brother this term. "We don't share any classes with the Ravenclaws, and I've got Quidditch practice four times a week."

"He's also always in the library," Ron muttered.

"There is nothing wrong with studying, Ronald," Hermione snapped.

"Relax, Hermione, I didn't mean it like that," Ron said quickly.

After glaring at Ron for a moment, Hermione asked, "So you and Harry get along then?"

"Yeah, of course we do," Nathan said without hesitation. "Why?"

"Oh, well, I just saw him in a compartment," Hermione smiled. "I thought he was you at first, actually."

Nathan laughed. "Please. We look nothing alike."

"From a distance you do," she insisted. "The only real difference is your eye colour and the way you do your hair."

"Maybe," Nathan acquiesced. "But would I be around a bunch of Ravenclaws talking about magical theory or whatever boring stuff the Ravenclaws discuss?"

"No, but neither was Harry. He was just sitting in a compartment reading a book."

"Really?" Nathan asked, surprised.

"I thought it was a little strange as well," Hermione admitted. "I know I saw Su Li, Lisa Turpin, and Terry Boot in another compartment so there are definitely other Ravenclaws on the train."

Standing up, Nathan said, "I should go see if he wants to join us."

“Don't worry about it, Nathan,” said Ron. “We're going to be getting to London in, like, ten minutes anyway, right Hermione?”

“True,” Hermione agreed. “It would be a waste of time for you to walk to his compartment, convince him to join us, and bring him here only for him to leave a few minutes later. He'd have to go get his stuff when we arrive.”

Nathan looked at the door for a moment before consenting to his friends' opinion; he'd talk to Harry at home later anyway.

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Necessary Conversations

Platform Nine and Three-Quarters, London...

Stepping off the train at platform nine and three-quarters, Harry scanned the crowd looking for his parents and brother. The platform, while not as busy as the first of September, had a good number of people milling around searching for family members.

Harry eventually found his parents standing next to a red-haired couple, who could only be the parents of Ron Weasley. A younger redheaded girl stood next to her mother with wide eyes and an excited look on her face. Harry briefly wondered just how many Weasleys there were. He knew Ron had twin brothers that were in their third year as well as a fifth year brother who was a prefect.

“Mum, Dad,” Harry greeted with a smile.

“Harry.” James happily pulled his oldest son into a hug before looking around curiously. “Where is your brother?”

“Oh, um, I'm not sure. We didn't sit with each other on the ride back.”

Lily glanced down at her son, concern evident in her eyes. "Why not?"

"I was talking to Professor Flitwick, and I arrived late to the station. Nathan had already found a compartment, and I didn't want to search the entire train trying to find him."

"Well... alright," James said hesitantly, deciding not to press Harry in a public setting. He'd ask Nathan later if they'd had some sort of falling out. "How was your first term?"

Not really wanting to talk about his first term at Hogwarts, Harry turned to Mr. and Mrs. Weasley. "I'm sorry for not introducing myself, sir, ma'am. I'm Harry Potter, it's nice to meet you."

"Such a polite young man." Mrs. Weasley smiled at Lily and James.

"It's nice to meet you as well, Harry," Mr. Weasley said, subtly guiding an embarrassed looking girl forward. "This is our daughter Ginny. She will be at Hogwarts with you starting next year."

"Are you excited about Hogwarts?" Harry asked, trying to be polite.

Ginny just nodded her head, appearing uncomfortable for some reason.

Seeing that Ginny wasn't about to talk and being in no mood to coax a conversation out the girl, Harry turned his attention to the discussion between his parents and the Weasleys.

"...completely agree, Arthur. Perhaps Boxing Day would work?" James asked.

"Unfortunately, we'll be in Romania 'till the 28th, James. We're going to visit my son Charlie who works at a dragon preserve."

Harry could only shake his head. There was another Weasley in Romania? How many kids did these people have?

“Ooooooooo, Mum, is that him?” Ginny squealed.

Slightly surprised by the quiet girl's outburst, Harry turned to where Ginny was frantically gesturing. The girl was practically jumping up and down at the sight of Nathan, Ron, and Hermione. Harry shook his head in annoyance – he had a feeling that it wasn't the sight of her brother or the Muggle-born witch that suddenly had Ginny excited.

Looking up at his father, Harry was hoping to see him give the girl a reproaching glare for her annoying fangirlishness. Unfortunately, his dad simply looked amused by Ginny's antics.

“Ginevra, it is not polite to point,” Mrs. Weasley chided, while sending an apologetic look to the Potters.

“Mum, Dad,” Nathan said arriving with a bright smile, “these are my friends Ron and Hermione.”

“It's very nice to meet you both,” Lily said kindly.

“It's nice to meet you as well, Mrs. Potter,” Hermione said as Ron was getting what looked to be a back-breaking hug from his mother.

Harry couldn't help but notice that Ginny had yet to look away from Nathan. It was slightly disturbing.

“How long have you been waiting here?” Nathan asked his dad, seemingly oblivious to his creepy redheaded stalker.

“Harry got here a few minutes ago, and before that we were speaking with the Weasleys.”

“How are we getting home?” asked Harry.

“Portkey that the Headmaster was kind enough to make for us,” James answered. “Now, tell me. Did you two pull any good pranks?” Seeing that Lily had suddenly turned around to glare at him, James quickly added, “Because I would hate to have to punish you over the break if you did.”

“No,” said Harry, “I didn't really do any pranks.”

“And I've been really busy with Quidditch,” Nathan added.

“I know. Minerva wrote and explained how you had made the team. I'm very proud of you, Nathan. Youngest Seeker in over a century,” James said excitedly. “I know your uncles have been over the moon about it as well.”

“And how are your grades, Nathan?” Lily asked sternly. “You're not letting them slide because of Quidditch, are you?”

“No, Mum. I think I'm doing alright,” Nathan said hesitantly.

“And you, Harry?” Lily asked.

“I think I did very well this term.”

“Nathan, I need to go find my parents. I think they're waiting for me on the other side of the barrier,” Hermione said.

“Oh, why don't I go with you so you aren't by yourself,” Lily offered with a smile. “I remember how hard it was to sometimes find my parents because of the Muggle-repelling ward on the platform. Honestly, I've told Albus that he needs to find a way to help the parents of Muggle-borns get onto the platform for the Christmas holiday and the end of the spring semester. Having children wandering around King's Cross looking for their parents is just asking for trouble.”

“Why didn't the charm affect them when we came here on the first of September?” Hermione asked, clearly hoping to learn more about the magical world.

“Your ticket to get on the Hogwarts Express was charmed to let your parents pass the Muggle-repelling ward on the platform for that

instance,” Lily explained as she led Hermione towards the Muggle part of King's Cross.

“Well, Ron, I'll see you in January. Enjoy Romania,” Nathan said.

“Thanks. I still can't believe my parents are letting me go when Percy and the twins are staying at Hogwarts,” Ron said smugly.

Harry snorted slightly. If all the time he had seen Percy hanging around Penelope Clearwater was any indication, Harry wasn't surprised that Percy would want to stay at Hogwarts since Penelope wouldn't be going home this break. As for the twins, Harry heard that their best friend Lee Jordan was staying at Hogwarts as well.

“Ron, Ginny. Come on, we've got to be going,” Mrs. Weasley said.

“Coming, Mum. I'll see you later, Nathan,” Ron said before leaving with his sister and parents.

“So, boys, how was your first term?” James asked.

“Great! Hogwarts is awesome, Dad, just like you said,” Nathan said happily.

James smiled at his son's exuberance. “Harry, how do you like being in Ravenclaw? I remember back in my fifth year, Sirius, Remus, and I charmed that stupid knocker to speak in limericks after it wouldn't let us into the Ravenclaw common room.”

Before Harry could answer, Lily arrived with a smile on her face. “Nathan, your friend Hermione seems like a very intelligent girl.”

Nathan just rolled his eyes. “Hermione's a genius. She's the only person I know who spends as much time in the library as Harry.”

“You say that like it's a bad thing.” Harry smirked. “We'll see who's laughing after our grades are delivered.”

“I'm sure you both did well,” James said, stopping any argument that might develop between his two sons. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a bizarrely multicolored striped sock.

Lily looked at the sock and shook her head slightly. “I honestly don't know what Albus was thinking, choosing that to be a Portkey.”

“I try not to contemplate why Albus does half the things he does, Lily. Fruit punch,” James said, activating the Portkey and sending the Potters back home.

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Potter Residence, (Dec. 20th)...

Harry,

I'm writing you to let you know that the first term grades have been scored, and that Filius did indeed send out your transcript to Durmstrang as he promised to do.

That is the good news.

Unfortunately, I also have some bad news to report to you.

Your first term grades have been scored.

Now, as you know, I am not allowed to discuss a student's scorecard prior to receipt of grades in the mail; however, I will say that your insistent complaints about the easiness of your exams were well founded.

Now, to the reason I am writing you. Filius has been acting slightly off ever since your meeting with him on the 16th. He has not been his excessively chipper self, which is very strange, especially around the holidays. Many members of the staff are concerned, but he has not yet told them the reason behind his less-than-joyous attitude.

Recently, Filius has taken to disappearing into his quarters, only showing up at meals. Also, he has begun asking everyone about how much free time they might have available next term to tutor a student. It is my opinion that now that Filius has seen your scores and is aware of your potential, he will not let you leave Hogwarts without a fight.

I am positive that Filius will soon be informing other members of the staff about your decision to leave Hogwarts. From what you have told me, your family is somewhat close with Headmaster Dumbledore as well as Professors McGonagall, Snape, and even Filius himself. It could easily get back to your parents that you desire to transfer.

I know you wanted to wait until after you know you have a spot at Durmstrang to tell your parents about wanting to leave Hogwarts, but you might want to consider telling them before they hear it from someone else.

The best of luck,

Professor Quirinus Quirrell

Harry scowled as he put down the letter. What was he going to do? He didn't want to tell his parents that he wanted to leave Hogwarts unless he was positive that Durmstrang had accepted him. He knew that he would have to fight his parents to get them to understand why he would want to leave, and he really didn't want to have that argument unless he knew Durmstrang would have a spot for him.

Still, if Quirrell was right, Professor Flitwick would tell the other teachers or Headmaster Dumbledore about him wanting to transfer. He had to stall Professor Flitwick somehow.

Sitting down at his desk, Harry took out a piece of parchment and a quill.

Dear Professor Flitwick,

I know we weren't able to meet for very long in your office before I had to leave...

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Uncomfortable Discoveries

Potter Residence, (Dec. 22nd)...

“Hey Harry,” Nathan said, entering his brother's room, “Mum wants to talk to us.”

“Oh?” Harry asked, a small smile tugging at the corner of his lips. “What did you do now?”

“Nothing,” Nathan said a little too quickly. “Well, nothing that would get you in trouble.”

“Whatever,” Harry said as he and his brother went downstairs and into the living room where their mother and father were talking.

“Harry, Nathan, your mother has just gotten off the fellowphone with the Grangers,” James said brightly. Harry and Nathan both snickered at their father's intentional mispronouncing of the Muggle device.

Lily shook her head. “James, stop being stupid. Anyway boys, your father and I have discussed it, and we're going to be having a small party on New Year's. As of right now, the only people who are coming are your uncles, the Weasleys, and the Grangers. Harry, I wanted to ask you if you wanted to invite anyone from Hogwarts? Albus will be providing Portkeys for everyone so we don't have to worry about giving away the secret to the Fidelius Charm.”

Harry shifted nervously. “Ugh, no, I'm good,” he said before making an excuse and going back upstairs to his room.

“That was strange,” James commented.

“I know,” Lily said in concern. “He's been acting a little ‘off’ lately. Nathan, did anything happen at Hogwarts?”

"I'm not sure," he said, feeling slightly guilty that something might be wrong with his brother and he hadn't realized. "I... well, Harry and I weren't able to spend a lot of time together this last term, so I didn't get to talk to him a lot."

Lily appeared surprised. "Why weren't you able to spend time together?"

"You didn't get into a fight, did you?" James asked. "Harry mentioned that you two didn't sit together on the train ride back home."

"No, we didn't get into a fight" Nathan said quickly, "It's just...he's in Ravenclaw, and I'm in Gryffindor. We don't share any classes, and I've been really busy with Quidditch and everything."

Lily and James shared a disbelieving look. "So you didn't talk to each other for an entire term?"

Nathan shook his head. "No, we did... just not a lot."

"Who does Harry spend time with?" asked Lily intently. "I know we've spoken about Ron and Hermione, but somehow I can't remember Harry ever mentioning his friends."

"I--I really don't know," Nathan admitted.

"I don't like the sound of this," Lily muttered. "Nathan, try harder. Can you think of anyone that Harry is close to at Hogwarts or might have mentioned as being a friend?"

Nathan thought back. He recalled all the times he saw Harry studying in the Library surrounded by books, but never people. At meals, his head always down, never involved in conversation. The happy smile on his face whenever they talked, and the brief flash of annoyance whenever Nathan had to leave and do something with Ron or Hermione.

With a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, Nathan remembered Hermione's comment about Harry sitting alone on the express. "I--I can't think of anybody."

"Nathan, why don't you go fly outside," James ordered. "Your mother and I need to talk."

Reluctantly, Nathan nodded his head and went outside. He didn't go flying though; he was too disappointed in himself. Sure he was busy at Hogwarts, but he should have recognized something was bothering Harry. He'd make it up to his brother next term. He'd make time to hang out with him, even if it meant hanging out in a library for a day studying. Nathan smiled slightly, Hermione would probably like that plan.

Once Nathan was outside, James turned to his wife. "Do you think I should go talk to Harry?"

"I don't know, James," Lily muttered. "Merlin, I knew something seemed off with Harry."

"What do you think we should do? After how quickly Harry left, he clearly doesn't want to talk about it."

"He's probably embarrassed, James. How would you feel?"

"I honestly don't know," James admitted. "I met Sirius on the express along with Remus and... him. I never had a problem with friends at Hogwarts after that."

"I can't believe Nathan," Lily said, the disappointment evident in her voice. "He should have realized something was wrong. I don't believe that tripe about how being in different houses means they didn't have time for one another. Severus and I were in different houses and that didn't stop us from being best friends for the longest time."

James smartly swallowed the comment he wanted to make about Snivellus. Lily and the greasy git had reconnected several years ago and had been steadily rebuilding their friendship. They had even

started to do some Potions research together. It had at first bothered him, but he had smartly swallowed his pride and never said anything. He had Lily, and he knew that she loved him. Snivellus wasn't worth fighting with his wife over anymore.

“So what do we do about Harry?” James finally asked.

“I think we should let him come to us,” Lily said after a moment of thought. “I don't want him to feel bad over Christmas, and Harry knows he can trust us with anything. If he hasn't talked to us about his problems by the start of the new year, we'll sit him down and talk to him about it.”

“I hope you're right.”

“Me too, James. Me too.”

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O is for Outstanding

Potter Residence, (Dec. 26th)...

“So Nathan actually didn't catch the snitch, Dad.” Harry smirked at his blushing brother. “He swallowed it!”

“We still won,” Nathan said indignantly as his brother and father laughed uproariously. This just wasn't fair. He couldn't even defend himself. It wasn't like he could tell his parents that someone had been jinxing his broomstick –they'd have him off the team faster than he could say Quidditch.

“I'm sure you played well, Nathan,” Lily said with a smile hinting at the corner of her mouth. “Your father and I will try our best to see your next game at Hogwarts.” Nathan beamed at his parents as they all sat around the kitchen table having brunch.

The sound of fluttering wings interrupted their meal as several owls entered from an open window. Two immediately flew towards Harry

and Nathan while the third owl settled next to their mother. "Must be your first term scores," Lily commented. "Albus said they would be getting sent out soon."

Harry quickly removed the owl of its burden and opened the letter. He read and then re-read his scores. While he thought his tests were easy, it was still hard to believe. He had perfect scores. Straight Outstandings. A note at the bottom of his letter from Professor Flitwick said that he hadn't missed so much as a single point on his Charms, Transfiguration, Defense, or Potions exams, and that Harry was first in his year.

"So how did you do?" James asked.

"I got an outstanding in Charms, Transfiguration, and Defense," Nathan said happily.

"That's excellent, Nathan," James said happily. "How about you, Harry?"

"Yes, Harry, how did you do?" Lily said, putting down her letter and looking intently at her older son. "Perhaps your scores will explain why Filius sent me a letter asking to meet with us on New Year's along with Headmaster Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall?"

Harry sighed. Apparently the letter he had sent to his Head of House hadn't done as good of a job as he had hoped.

"Well, Harry?" James asked.

"I got Outstandings in all my classes," Harry said somewhat defensively. Did his parents really think he would have done poorly?

James took his son's score card and whistled appreciatively. "Wow, I don't think even you got scores this good, Lily."

Lily looked over her husband's shoulder and her eyes widened slightly. "I know I didn't. Harry, this is an incredible score card. Can

you think of any reason why Filius would want to meet with us after seeing scores this good?"

"Maybe," Harry said shrugging his shoulders. "I have to go send a letter."

Harry quickly stood and left the table. A few seconds later, Harry was up the stairs and in his room. A silencing charm on his door ensured that his scream of frustration wasn't heard by anyone.

Flitwick must have told Dumbledore and McGonagall about him wanting to leave Hogwarts. That could be the only reason for all of them showing up on New Year's. They were all going to try to talk him out of transferring. At least Professor Flitwick hadn't outright told his parents that he wanted to transfer, so his letter had apparently done something to convince his Head of House. Still, it was going to be hard enough to convince his parents that he wanted to leave Hogwarts. Now that he had the Headmaster, his Head of House, and Professor McGonagall to deal with as well, he was going to need a plan.

Taking out a piece of parchment, Harry quickly scribbled out a letter.

Dear Professor Quirrell,

My grades came today along with a letter from Professor Flitwick to my parents...

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A Decision That Will Live in Infamy

Potter Residence, (Dec. 31st)...

"So, Harry, only one term at Hogwarts and you're already in so much trouble that the Headmaster, Deputy Headmistress, and your Head of House all need to show up to talk to your parents about you, huh?" Sirius teased.

“Padfoot, shut up. I'm sure it's nothing to worry about, Harry,” said Remus. “Your first term grades were incredible, so I doubt you'll be in any trouble. Besides, I know the Headmaster was planning on spending New Year's here anyway and Minerva was invited as well, so perhaps Filius just wants to talk to you or—”

“Maybe he'll give you an award for being the smartest Ravenclaw, ever,” Sirius said with a bemused expression. Harry couldn't help but smile. His uncles always had the ability to make him laugh, even now, as he was nervously awaiting his professors' arrival.

With a whoosh of displaced air, Harry saw the Grangers arrive with Professor McGonagall. At least Harry assumed it was the Grangers. Judging from the lack of red hair, he knew it wasn't the Weasleys, and the three people around Professor McGonagall had crashed to the floor upon arrival; clearly the result of a lack of experience traveling by Portkey.

“That was incredible,” Mr. Granger said after climbing to his feet. “It was like riding a roller coaster but without being strapped into anything.” From the look on Hermione and her mother's faces, the two female Grangers did not appreciate the style of travel nearly as much.

Mrs. Granger cast a weary sidewise glance at the innocent looking dishtowel that had managed to transport them across the country in a matter of seconds. “You weren't kidding when you said traveling by Portkey was something you had to experience to understand Professor.”

“When will Hermione learn how to make those?” Mr. Granger asked.

Sirius let out a bark of laughter, alerting Professor McGonagall and the three Grangers to their presence in the room. “I think I could teach the little lady how to make them if you really wan—”

“Sirius Black, you will do no such thing,” McGonagall snapped. Turning to Mr. Granger, Professor McGonagall drastically softened her tone. “Portkey creation is highly restricted, and it isn't something

that Hogwarts typically teaches its students. The only reason I was able to acquire one for us to use is that the Headmaster, in his roll as Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, is allowed to make them. I do not even want to postulate a guess as to why you, Mr. Black, know how to create them."

Sirius appeared scandalized. "Minerva, I'm hurt. Do you really think that I would ever do anything, untoward with a Portkey?"

"Remus, it is good to see you again." Minerva smiled, ignoring Sirius's question.

"Professor, it's always nice to see you as well," Remus replied. "I understand you've gotten another Potter to win the Quidditch Cup for you."

"Yes, well, I couldn't have such talent watching a match from the stands, could I?" Minerva asked before turning somewhat serious. "But I suppose introductions are in order. Mr. and Mrs. Granger, Hermione, allow me to introduce Remus Lupin, and that lecherous man standing next to him is Sirius Black."

"In case you couldn't tell, I was Minerva's favorite student," Sirius said in a stage whisper to Harry.

Mr. Granger walked over and extended his hand. "It's nice to meet you, Remus, Sirius. Now, is this the young man who has somehow captured my daughter's heart?" he asked, looking at Harry.

"Dan, don't embarrass our daughter," Mrs. Granger chided. "We've only been here for a few minutes. We'll have plenty of time for that later."

"Mum!" Hermione exclaimed, looking at her mother in horror.

"I'm Harry Potter, sir. Nathan is my brother, but I'm in Hermione's year at Hogwarts," Harry said as he politely shook Mr. and Mrs. Granger's hands. "It's nice to see you as well, Professor."

“Mr. Potter,” Professor McGonagall said kindly.

“So, Minnie, are you going to tell us what the big hush-hush secret meeting tonight is all about?” Sirius asked as he draped an arm over his old Head of House's shoulder. As Sirius escorted Professor McGonagall out of the living room, Harry was willing to bet that his transfiguration professor was fighting the urge to turn into her cat form and scratch Sirius's eyes out.

Harry saw Mr. Granger fight back a laugh at Sirius's actions while both Hermione and Mrs. Granger seemed to be sending very reproachful looks at him.

“Mr. Black...”

Sirius pouted. “Seriously, Minerva, why do you call James, Lily, and Remus by their first names, but I'm still Mr. Black?”

“Because they have all proven that they are adults,” Minerva snapped. “When you grow up, I will call you something other than Mr. Black. Now take your arm off of me this instant, or I will make sure that you spend the rest of the evening as a pincushion!”

Sirius immediately removed his arm and took a step away from the irate transfiguration mistress, causing everyone to laugh and Professor McGonagall to look smug.

“Secret meeting?” Hermione asked Harry curiously.

“Don't worry about it,” Harry said. “Sirius was just, well, being Sirius.”

“He's certainly immature,” Hermione huffed, clearly disapproving of Sirius' actions.

“Sirius was at Hogwarts with my dad and mum. They were all Gryffindors and have known Professor McGonagall for a long time,

Hermione. They also fought in the war together,” Harry said, defending his godfather's actions.

“Well,” Hermione said, though a bit less judgmental, “he could still use a bit better manners.”

Before Harry could reply, Nathan, Lily, and James entered the room.

“Hi, Nathan,” Hermione greeted with a bright smile. “These are my parents.”

“It's nice to meet you sir, ma'am.”

“You as well, Nathan. Hermione has told us a lot about you,” Mr. Granger said.

“Err...nothing bad, right?”

Both Grangers just smiled at him in a knowing way, and Nathan shot Hermione a reproachful look.

“Oh please, I just said that you should spend more time on your studies instead of playing that silly game.”

“Silly game!” James said in mock horror. “Surely you're not talking about Quidditch, young lady?”

“I sincerely hope she is,” Lily said seriously. “Nathan could use someone reminding him that the world doesn't revolve around that sport.” Everyone in the room laughed as Hermione blushed at being simultaneously approved and disapproved of by the Potters.

“Lily, it's good to see you again,” Mrs. Granger said kindly.

“You too, Emma. This is my husband James, and children Harry and Nathan.”

“Yes, Dan and I met Harry earlier, a very polite young man...”

Harry blushed and wandered away, leaving the adults, and Sirius, to discuss whatever it is that adults talk about.

“So did McGonagall say anything?” Nathan asked catching up to his brother.

Harry looked uncomfortably at Hermione for a moment. “No, though Sirius did try to ask.”

“Say anything about what?” Hermione asked curiously.

Nathan was about to answer when there was another whoosh of displaced air, signaling the arrival of the Weasley family. Harry, Nathan, and Hermione walked back to the living room in time to see Ron and his sister picking themselves up off the ground.

“I suppose we should say hello to his parents,” Hermione instructed as she led them over to the Weasley family.

The introductions to the Weasleys didn't take nearly as long as with the Grangers. Harry and Nathan had already been introduced to them at King's Cross, and Ron quickly dragged Nathan and Hermione away as soon as the basic pleasantries were done. That left Harry standing next to Ginny Weasley, who, once again, seemed to be in a state of stunned silence.

“So, Ginny,” Harry said, trying to think of anything to engage the girl in conversation. “Do you like Quidditch?” he eventually asked out of desperation.

“Yes,” she mumbled shyly.

Seeing that the girl wasn't about to elaborate, Harry left to find his brother and his friends –at least they knew how to talk properly. After not finding them anywhere downstairs, Harry went upstairs and was about to enter his brother's room when he heard Nathan say, “I think we should talk to Harry about it.”

Curious, Harry continued to listen.

“Are you sure that's smart?” Ron asked. “You said it yourself, your brother likes Snape. He'd never believe us.”

Harry scowled. Just great, his brother was going to blame Snape for something. Harry had heard the rumors about how Snape treated his brother in his classroom. While Harry thought it wasn't exactly fair, he had written his mother and she had explained it somewhat to him. Apparently, Snape and his father did not get along at school, and Snape now saw Nathan as James re-incarnate, obsessed with Quidditch and more interested in joking around than doing school work. Harry's academic prowess in Potions had been enough for Snape to realize that he was more like his mother than his father, and Snape had not treated Harry badly at all.

“...I couldn't find him in the library, I doubt Harry would know,” Hermione said.

Harry cursed himself for not paying attention. Find who in the library? And for that matter who was Granger to think she was better than him? He was top in their year, not her!

“Alright, I just thought he could help,” Nathan said.

“Maybe he could,” Hermione said hesitantly. “We just have to make sure he won't tell anyone what we suspect.”

“We can trust him,” Nathan said certainly.

What was going on? Trust him with what? Why was his brother keeping something secret from him?

“Harry?”

Harry quickly turned around and saw his uncle standing at the top of the stairs. “Oh, hey Uncle Sirius. I was just looking for Nathan.”

“Well your mum sent me to get everyone, dinner's ready.”

“I'll get Nathan,” Harry said as he knocked on his brother's door. A moment later the door opened, revealing his slightly guilty-looking brother.

“Hey Nathan, dinner's ready,” Harry said, pretending that he hadn't heard anything between Nathan and his friends.

“Oh, alright. Ron, Hermione, dinner's ready.”

“Great! I was getting hungry,” Ron said, quickly leaving the room and going downstairs.

“Harry,” Sirius said in a surprisingly serious tone that instantly grabbed Harry and Nathan's attention. “Professors Dumbledore and Flitwick are here. They want to talk to you and your parents after dinner.”

Harry simply nodded his head and ignored the very curious look that Hermione was sending him as they walked downstairs. Arriving in the dining room, Harry immediately took an open seat next to Remus, two seats down from Professor Flitwick, who he acknowledged with a nod.

“Well now that everyone's here, we can begin,” Lily said as she casually waved her wand, causing a knife to rise in the air and cut several pieces of the roast in the center of the table. Once the roast was sufficiently cut, every plate rose up and one by one had a piece of meat, some vegetables, and potatoes placed on it before it went back to its owner.

“Amazing,” Mrs. Granger said in awe.

Lily laughed. “If you think that's nice, imagine not having to do dishes ever again. My mother thought that was the single greatest benefit of magic.”

Immediately conversations started to pop up around the table. Sirius was unsuccessfully trying to convince Professor McGonagall that the catnip that was sent to her for Christmas was not from him. Professor Flitwick, Lily, and Mrs. Weasley began explaining the different charms that were rather common around the house to the three Grangers. James, Sirius, Mr. Weasley, Nathan, Ron, and, surprisingly, Professor Dumbledore were discussing Puddlemere's chances at winning the title this year.

"You have nothing to be worried about, Harry," Remus said.

"No, I know," Harry answered. "I'm certain I'm not in trouble."

"Really?" Remus asked with a raised eyebrow. "So if you know you aren't in any trouble, why are you nervous?"

"I'm not."

Remus just smiled and tapped his nose. "Harry, you smell nervous and anxious. If you know you are not going to be getting in trouble, what is there to worry about?"

"Well... how would you feel if the Headmaster, Deputy Headmistress, and your Head of House all showed up to talk to you when you were a first year?"

"I'd be terrified." Remus recalled meeting Dumbledore when he was ten and being frightened to death that the man would hate him for being a werewolf.

"Still, you're not scared," Remus said, seemingly thinking out loud. "So, wait a minute, do you know what this is about?"

Harry fidgeted nervously. He didn't want to lie to his uncle, or anyone for that matter. So far he'd just been avoiding the question or giving half-truths, but he hadn't lied.

"Harry?" Remus asked again.

“Well, I might have an idea what it's about.”

“Then why didn't you tell anyone...” Remus trailed off as a very large and imposing eagle owl began pecking against the window with a letter tied to its leg.

Lily flicked her wand and opened the window. The owl flew towards Harry, landed on the back of his chair, and extended his leg, showing the letter that was tied to it. Harry quickly untied the letter and gave the large bird a piece of meat.

Looking down at the letter, Harry saw the Coat of Arms for Durmstrang: a double-headed eagle sitting on top of a skull, and a flag with the words Durmstrang Institute emblazoned across it. Harry nervously opened the letter – he was so focused that he didn't realize that all other conversations had stopped around the table.

Mr. Potter,

It gives me great pleasure to award you admission to the Durmstrang Institute of Magic. Since you are a transfer student, your letter of acceptance is due no later than the 6th of January, and you will be required to take several placement tests. The tests will be administered by a Durmstrang representative at the British Ministry of Magic on January 8th. Once your testing has been complete, you will be given a book list and a Portkey that will take you to the school on the 11th of January.

Congratulations,

Demetri Überzeug

Assistant to the Highmaster

“Harry?” Professor Flitwick asked, breaking the silence.

Harry smiled broadly. “I got in.”

“In where?” Remus asked as he picked up the envelope. He glanced at it for a moment before he turned to face Harry, shock registering on his face. “Why?”

“What's going on, Harry?” James asked. “Remus, who was that letter from?”

“It's a letter... from Durmstrang,” Remus said in disbelief.

Lily's eyes widened. “Harry, why are you getting a letter from Durmstrang?”

“While the timing is unfortunate as it has interrupted our meal,” Dumbledore said, standing up, “Harry, I believe we should have that discussion now.”

Professor Flitwick immediately stood, and he was quickly followed by Professor McGonagall.

“Is there a comfortable place we can talk in private?” Dumbledore asked.

“The living room, but Albus, what exactly is going on? Why do you all need to talk to Harry?” Lily demanded.

“Harry, you said you wanted to wait,” Professor Flitwick gestured to the letter, not looking particularly pleased. “Well, you have your answer.”

Reluctantly, Harry realized that the moment had finally come, and he couldn't put it off any longer. “Mum, Dad, I don't want to go back to Hogwarts.”

“What!” James and Nathan exclaimed simultaneously while Sirius simply stared at his godson incomprehensibly.

“Harry,” Lily asked hesitantly, “why on earth don't you want to go back to Hogwarts? You're first in your year.”

Ignoring Hermione's surprised gasp, Filius took charge. "Lily, James, perhaps this is a conversation that is best done in private?"

Seeing that both the Weasleys and the Grangers were staring at Harry, Lily quickly agreed. "Very well, Arthur, Molly, Dan, Emma, excuse us."

As all the Potters, Sirius, and Remus stood up and followed the Professors out of the dining room, Harry heard Ron say, "He's a loon, why would anyone want to leave Hogwarts?"

The Headmaster led everyone into the Potter's living room and once everyone was settled, cast a series of locking and silencing charms, ensuring that they wouldn't be overheard.

"Alright. Now what is going on, Harry?" James asked.

"Why don't I begin," Filius said, noticing Harry's hesitancy. "Earlier this month, Harry approached me asking that I send out a copy of his transcript to Durmstrang. I did not get a chance to inquire why he was interested in transferring, but he seemed to have done some research about it, otherwise he would not have known to come to me about sending out his academic record. Harry then sent me a letter on the twenty-second politely asking that I not tell anyone about his desire to leave Hogwarts until he was certain that he would be accepted at Durmstrang. He, understandably, felt that his family would be against such an idea, and he did not want to have the discussion unless he knew he had a spot at Durmstrang. I had just finished informing Albus and Minerva about your potential transfer, Harry, when your owl arrived. After looking at your scores, we knew that you would be accepted... how could you not be?" He ended a tad bit bitterly.

When Filius fell silent, Professor Dumbledore continued. "I inquired from a contact at Durmstrang and found out that they would be sending you a positive response and that it should arrive by today."

“Which is why we all came tonight,” McGonagall stated. “We knew that a decision would need to be made soon, and we wanted to speak with you beforehand.”

“Alright, that explains why you're here,” Lily said. “But why do you want to leave Hogwarts, Harry?”

“I just don't like it,” Harry said quietly.

“What exactly don't you like about Hogwarts, my boy?” Dumbledore asked kindly.

“And why didn't you come to me with any problems you might be having?” Flitwick asked.

“I did, sir,” Harry protested. “I went to you, Professor McGonagall, and Professor Snape. You all told me that I was too young to learn advanced material; that everything at Hogwarts would get harder for me, but it never did! I'm so bored in class, sir.”

“You were reading a third year Transfiguration book,” Nathan blurted out. “That wasn't just a one-time thing, was it?”

Everyone turned to look at Nathan, and then back at Harry. All of the professors looked surprised at that bit of information. “Mr. Potter, is that true? Are you really that far ahead?” Professor McGonagall asked in astonishment.

“Yes. Madam Pince has been helping me find good books on theory so that I'm not confused by some of the advanced material.”

“That's incredible,” Flitwick said. “What about Charms?”

“I've been reading an older edition of the third year Charms book since late October.”

“Mr. Potter, just how did you get this far ahead of your peers?” Dumbledore asked curiously.

Lily sighed. "That may be my fault. Harry asked me to teach him magic a few years ago."

"But, and I mean no offense, Nathan's grades are not perfect in four classes," McGonagall said, apparently still amazed that the boy in front of her could be so far ahead.

"I admit that while I taught the boys the same material, Harry has always been more... enthusiastic about it," said Lily. "I knew he was sneaking some books out of our library to read, but I didn't realize just how advanced they were. He didn't have a wand, so I never thought reading ahead would give him too much of an advantage."

"Mr. Potter, just how far ahead were you when you entered Hogwarts?" asked Dumbledore. "And how have you shown such a command for magic when you only had your wand for a month before classes started?"

Harry let a grin cross his face. "I might have only had my wand for a month, sir, but I've been getting ready to do magic for my entire life. I studied the theory, and I practiced the wand movements all the time. Since I knew I was magical, and I knew the right incantations and wand movements, it was easy for me to make the spells work. Most of the spells in my first year book I got on my first or second try, and a lot of the second year spells didn't take me too long to master."

Filius could only shake his head in amazement. "Unbelievable."

"Well, this is rather...unprecedented," Dumbledore mused. "Not even I was so advanced or comfortable with my magic when I began Hogwarts."

"But why Durmstrang?" Sirius interjected. "You know they teach the Dark Arts there, don't you, Harry? Why not Beauxbatons? At the very least they have a bunch of pretty French girls."

"Durmstrang encourages people to study advanced magic, and they let people move ahead of their peers into harder classes. I could

easily test into my second or maybe even third year in a bunch of classes.” Harry couldn’t help but grow excited as he spoke about the possibility of moving ahead in classes. “And because they teach the Dark Arts, they don’t have a restricted section in their library. That means I can learn advanced charms and transfiguration without needing a pass to take out the advanced material.”

Dumbledore narrowed his eyes slightly. “Where exactly did you learn this from, Harry? What you are speaking of is not common knowledge for someone who has never been to Durmstrang, and I know of no book in the Hogwarts library that would mention it.”

Harry froze. Professor Quirrell has specifically mentioned not to say anything about how close they were, and Harry was not about to betray the closest thing to a friend that he had at Hogwarts. “Well, I wrote to the Highmaster asking what Durmstrang could offer me, and he wrote back explaining how Durmstrang was superior to Hogwarts.”

With a noticeable sigh, Dumbledore removed his glasses and rubbed the bridge of his nose. “Yes, Igor has always believed that Durmstrang should be considered the premier school of magic in Europe; however, I am surprised that he took the time to write you back Harry. Igor Karkaroff has never been one for friendly conversations, especially with students.”

“Karkaroff!” exclaimed James. “Igor Karkaroff is the Headmaster of Durmstrang? Well, that settles it. Harry, you are not stepping one foot inside that school!”

“What! Why not?”

“He was a Death Eater, Harry. This is not up for debate,” Lily agreed.

Harry looked confused. “But if everyone knows he’s a Death Eater, why isn’t he in prison?”

“Igor claimed to have a change of heart and revealed several key Death Eaters before the Wizengamot,” Dumbledore said hesitantly.

“So... he sold out a lot of Death Eaters to get out of prison?” Harry asked.

“Essentially, yes,” Dumbledore acquiesced.

“But if he realized he was wrong and gave up the other Death Eaters...”

“Harry, Igor did unspeakable things for Voldemort,” Dumbledore said, causing everyone else in the room to flinch. “He betrayed his fellow Death Eaters to avoid Azkaban. It had nothing to do with any sudden moral objection.”

“But if something happened to me at Durmstrang, everyone would just assume that he did it,” Harry argued. “He’d be right back in front of the Wizengamot answering questions, and there is no way he would be released a second time.”

“Igor is very clever, Harry, and he is ruthless,” Dumbledore warned. “If he wanted to harm you, he could very easily facilitate it by means that would not reflect directly on him.”

“I’m not stupid, sir, I’m not going to be walking around at night unsupervised. Plus, don’t the Professors at Durmstrang have to take oaths that they won’t harm a student and grade fairly? Since they usually only accept purebloods, Durmstrang had to make sure that feuds between families wouldn’t spill over between faculty and students.”

“That...is true,” Dumbledore admitted, “and once again you have demonstrated a piece of knowledge that typically does not leave Durmstrang. I take it Igor wanted to assure you of your safety?”

“Wait. Just wait. I am not comfortable with this,” James said, stopping Dumbledore and Harry's discussion. “Not at all, Harry. I don’t care that Karkaroff can’t do anything; I don’t want a Death Eater near any of my children. It’s bad enough that I have to put up with Sn—”

“James,” Lily hissed angrily, “you promised.”

“Sorry,” he muttered, not sounding at all apologetic.

“Harry, what if I agreed to give you the extra lessons you requested?” Filius asked.

Harry’s eyes widened. Private lessons with Professor Flitwick would be amazing. “Would I still have to attend Charms class? Or could I maybe move into a more advanced class?”

Flitwick looked at Dumbledore, who shook his head slightly. “No, Harry, you can not be moved ahead.”

“Then that doesn’t solve the problem,” Harry said adamantly. “I’d still be bored, and I’d have to do a bunch of essays and take tests on stuff I learned ages ago.”

“Harry, that is a very generous offer from Professor Flitwick, you should consider it,” Lily said.

“I understand that, and I do appreciate it Professor, but...well, Mum, Dad, can I talk to you and the professors in private?” Harry asked his parents hesitantly. He didn’t want to do this, but it was looking like Quirrell was right.

Everyone appeared surprised that Harry didn’t want his uncles or brother in the room.

“You can say anything in front of Sirius and I, Harry,” Remus said softly. “You know that.”

“I--I know that, but it’s...well, it’s embarrassing,” Harry admitted truthfully.

Lily and James shared a look with one another and seemed to come to a conclusion. “Sirius, Remus, Nathan, please give us a moment.”

After a surprised glance at Lily and James, Sirius, Remus, and a protesting Nathan got up and left.

“What’s this about, Mr. Potter?” Professor McGonagall asked.

“I... well, I wasn’t exactly being one hundred percent truthful about why I wanted to leave Hogwarts,” Harry said, his face turning red. Taking a deep breath, Harry opened his mouth several times before gathering the courage needed. “I--I don’t have any friends.” Looking up, Harry saw the confusion on Professors McGonagall and Flitwick’s faces while his parents looked deeply saddened, but not surprised. The worst though was Professor Dumbledore. The man Harry considered a grandfather just stared deep into his eyes until, slowly, an expression of pained understanding appeared on his face.

“What do you mean, Harry?” Flitwick asked.

Harry didn’t have to use the charm that Quirrell told him would fake tears as he felt a few fall on their own. “I don’t have any friends, sir. All the other Ravenclaws hate me.”

“Harry,” Lily said softly, “why didn’t you tell us?”

Harry just shrugged his shoulders and did his best to hide his embarrassment.

“What about your brother?” James asked, wanting to hear Harry’s opinion on the matter.

“He’s really busy,” Harry said quietly, “and whenever we do hang out, he brings Ron with him.”

“You don’t like Ron?” Lily asked.

“All he does is talk about Quidditch and make fun of me for wanting to study,” Harry said with exasperation. “When Nathan and I actually are talking or studying together, Ron complains about being bored and eventually Nathan and him go fly, or play chess, or explore the castle, or do something else I’m not interested in.”

James frowned. "Have you told Nathan about this?"

"No," said Harry bitterly, "it's not like we hang out all that much anyway."

"You said you don't get along with your housemates?" Filius asked in concern.

Harry couldn't keep the anger from showing on his face, surprising everyone in the room. "They're just obsessed with knowing about the Boy Who Lived. They don't even care about getting to know me."

Filius shook his head, trying to think of ways to resolve this. "Have you given them a chance to see you as a different person?"

"Of course," Harry snapped out in frustration, "but just because I tell them that Nathan wasn't trained by the Headmaster from birth to be the next Merlin, they all think I'm jealous of Nathan for being the Boy Who Lived. It's not like they're even interested in getting to know Nathan, all they care about is the myth of the Boy Who Lived. I know they are Ravenclaws, sir, but they are a group of complete idiots!"

James snorted and was sent a reproachful look from both Filius and his wife. Wisely, he shut up.

"And then," Harry continued angrily, "after they realized I'm smarter than them, they started saying all kinds of awful things about me behind my back! Then they had the gall to be upset with me when I refused to help them do their homework the day it's due. I hate them, sir. I hate them!"

To say that the three Hogwarts professors were stunned was an understatement. Filius was horrified at what had been going on seemingly under his nose. McGonagall was surprised that Harry Potter, the normally polite and kind young man, was speaking with such rage towards his peers.

Finally, Albus Dumbledore was truly concerned. The anger Harry had just shown reminded him of another boy. A boy who also had a tremendous control over his magic from a young age and let his anger and loneliness destroy him. No, Albus had seen firsthand what had become of Tom Riddle, and he would not, he could not, allow Harry, who was like a grandson to him, to fall the same way that Tom had. But was allowing Harry to transfer the answer? A long time ago Gellert had spoken to him at length about Durmstrang, and he knew that the school wasn't evil as many people made it out to be. They had, after all, expelled Gellert when he pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable.

"Mr. Potter, Harry, why didn't you come to me with your problem?" Filius eventually asked.

"It was embarrassing, sir," Harry said honestly, "and there was nothing you could do. You can't make someone be your friend."

The prolonged silence that filled the room was palpable.

"Please let me transfer," Harry practically begged.

"Harry, are you sure this is what you want?" Lily asked, deeply saddened by what her son had just told them. It was every parent's nightmare to have your child feel alone, and what had been happening to Harry at Hogwarts simply broke her heart.

"Yes, please."

"Albus, do you think Harry would be safe at Durmstrang?" Lily asked, ignoring James's protest.

"Harry is correct that the faculty at Durmstrang would not be able to do him harm magically; however, Harry, you should know that Durmstrang does enforce corporal punishment as discipline. There is also the student population that could prove to be dangerous."

Thankfully, Quirrell had prepared him for this objection. Without hesitation, Harry said, "Nott, Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, Flint, Parkinson,

and Travers.” When Quirrell had written and listed all the children, nieces, and nephews of confirmed or rumored Death Eaters, Harry had initially been horrified, but he privately admitted that the information would indeed be useful to convince his parents.

“A valid point,” Dumbledore conceded. “Voldemort did recruit most his followers from England, and so you are unlikely to find as many of his supporters' children at Durmstrang, which caters to a more international group of students.”

“You're forgetting Karkaroff,” James insisted. “He might not be able to magically harm Harry, but what about non-magically? You said that Durmstrang employs corporal punishment. What does that entail?”

Dumbledore grimaced. “Durmstrang's punishment system is very similar to what Hogwarts had before I became Headmaster and eliminated what I considered unsavory practices. Whippings, floggings, and being chained by your wrists or ankles are not uncommon forms of discipline.”

“I, Harry, I'm sorry,” Lily had tears in her eyes. “I will not allow you to be persecuted by Igor Karkaroff! The answer is...”

“No,” Harry said desperately. “I won't get into trouble. I promise. I've never gotten a detention at Hogwarts, and I won't at Durmstrang. I swear.”

“It might not be that simple Harry,” James explained. “Karkaroff could instruct his professors to hold you to a higher standard than the rest of your peers. I admit I'm not fond of the idea of you leaving Hogwarts, but I absolutely refuse to send you someplace where you could be hurt.

Harry looked around the room, hoping to find someone that would come to his aid. At first glance, Flitwick appeared sad, but the slight glimmer in his eye told Harry that Flitwick was secretly pleased that he would be staying at Hogwarts. McGonagall, likewise, looked troubled by Harry's story, but she did not appear at all sympathetic towards him wanting to leave Hogwarts. Harry could see some tears

forming in his mother's eyes as he silently begged her to reconsider, but she shook her head slightly. Turning to look at his father, Harry immediately knew that he had no chance of convincing him.

Desperately, Harry looked at Professor Dumbledore. The typically constant twinkle in his grandfather's eyes was gone, replaced by a look of deep sadness and pity. When it appeared that Dumbledore as well would not lift a finger to help him, Harry felt his anger grow. After everything he had said, after everything he explained, after revealing his most embarrassing secret, his family and professors didn't care. They all wanted him to go back to Hogwarts. It wasn't fair!

Suddenly, a bookshelf located directly behind Harry exploded, showering the room with splinters, and causing everyone to jump in shock. Everyone, that is, except Harry and Dumbledore, who simply continued to look at Harry with growing concern. Meeting his professor's eyes, Harry tried to convey the anger and betrayal he was feeling towards everyone in the room.

"Perhaps," Dumbledore said, redirecting everyone's attention from the destroyed bookshelf, "I might be able to help. Lily, James if your only concern for sending Harry to Durmstrang is his safety, I shall go speak with Igor personally. I happen to have in my possession a few pensieve memories of him acting on Voldemort's orders outside of England. Our Wizengamot might have given Igor a pardon, but that doesn't mean other countries wouldn't be interested in finding the person responsible for a few unsolved crimes. That should certainly provide the proper motivation for Igor to not only treat Harry fairly, but to ensure that he is well looked after."

It took Harry all of three seconds to process what Dumbledore had said before he jumped out of his seat, and, with a look of pure joy on his face, hugged his grandfather. "Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

"Albus, I don't understand," Lily said in confusion. "If you had this evidence, why haven't you used it already? Karkaroff does not deserve your protection!"

“Lily,” Albus said wearily, “had I given the evidence to the other ministries immediately after Igor left Britain in 1981, there was a strong possibility that he could have evaded justice. Igor was a very talented duelist back then, and he was completely ruthless. I have no doubt that should he have managed to avoid the Aurors, he would have gone underground and continued to harm innocents. By allowing Karkaroff to take an honest profession, where he knows I am watching him, he has been partially held in check. Now that Igor has grown accustomed to a certain lifestyle at Durmstrang, he will fear my evidence much more than he would have ten years ago.”

“So can I go Mum? Dad? Please!” Harry begged.

James looked at his son's pleading face. If Albus could promise Harry's safety... could he really tell Harry no? A quick glance at Lily told him that she had already accepted Harry leaving Hogwarts and wouldn't be much help if he wanted to force his son to stay. Sadly, James knew that there was only one option left for him to choose. “Harry, if Albus can assure your mother and I of your safety, I, well, I suppose we can let you transfer.”

Smiling brightly, Harry hugged his parents and began explaining just what was involved in the transfer process.

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Outside in the hallway...

Sirius canceled the eavesdropping charm. “Not a word,” he said to Nathan and Remus. “Harry can never know we heard.”

“But I should say something,” Nathan protested. “I need to apologize.”

“How do you think that would make him feel?” Remus asked, shaking his head sadly. “He clearly didn't want us to know, Nathan. You would just make him feel bad. It wouldn't make him change his mind.”

“But he’s leaving and it’s my fault! I should have spent more time with him.”

“Nathan, this isn’t your fault. You didn’t make the other Ravenclaws dislike Harry.”

“But it is,” Nathan argued. “If I wasn’t the Boy Who Lived, Harry wouldn’t have had those problems.”

“Nathan we can’t change who we are,” Sirius said, trying to calm down his nephew.

“I should have done something, though,” Nathan said, tearing away from his uncles and running up the stairs to his room. He didn’t notice the concerned looks that the Grangers and Weasleys sent him as he passed the dining room.

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A Parting of Ways

Potter Residence, (Jan. 11th)...

Surveying his room, Harry was pretty sure that he hadn't forgotten anything. He was departing for Durmstrang soon, and he definitely didn't want to leave anything at home by mistake. His trunk was packed to its magically-expanded brim. While Durmstrang required casual day robes like Hogwarts, they had to be specially-cut red robes with the Durmstrang crest magically embroidered on them. Durmstrang also required that he buy several heavy Russian-made ushankas and tsigeika coats. The heavy coats were lined with special built-in heating charms, and Harry couldn't imagine a situation where he would ever want to wear such a coat. He had practically started sweating after trying on the thing at Madam Malkin's. Durmstrang couldn't possibly be that cold.

Harry had taken his tests at the Ministry of Magic, and was quite proud to say he had surprised the examiner with his skill. He was actually ahead in third year Charms and Transfiguration theory, but

he was slightly behind in the practical aspects. Because of that, he had been granted tentative acceptance into third year classes in Transfiguration and Charms. If it appeared that he couldn't keep up with the practical work, the instructor had the option to send him down to the second year class after a month. Harry also managed to enter second year classes in Potions, History of Magic, and Herbology. His final two courses would be first year Dark Arts and Spell Crafting.

It had initially surprised him that Astronomy was not a core subject at Durmstrang, but Spell Crafting was a class that seemed very interesting. He had only glanced through his book, but the amount of effort it took to create your own spell was astonishing. When Harry had mentioned this to his mother, she had recommended he write to Professor Snape as he had created several spells while at Hogwarts.

If Harry was honest with himself, he admitted that he could have tested better than he did on his Dark Arts exam. He certainly felt that he could have tested into his second year for that class, but with his father standing in the room watching him perform the spells for the Durmstrang representative, Harry was hesitant to show just how much Quirrell had told him about the Dark Arts. While he didn't know a whole lot, it was still more than any Hogwarts first year should have known. Plus, it would be a hard claim to sell that he learned some basic Dark Arts at Hogwarts. It's not like he was allowed into the Restricted Section to look at those books.

Confident that he had everything packed, Harry casually levitated his trunk behind him and walked out of his room and downstairs. He immediately saw Nathan sitting at the kitchen table and looking unhappy.

Harry hadn't seen much of his brother of late, and that wasn't Nathan's fault. He had been very busy not only preparing to take his tests at the Ministry of Magic, but also trying to learn as much German as he could before he went to Durmstrang. Professor Dumbledore had visited for at least an hour every day since Harry had sent out his acceptance letter, and he had personally been helping Harry learn how to read, write, and speak in German.

The charm that helped someone learn a language worked by momentarily enhancing the part of the brain that dealt with understanding languages. During the period that the charm was active, the person it was cast on should be completely immersed in the language he was trying to study with no outside interruptions. Fortunately for Harry, Professor Dumbledore was fluent in German, along with several dozen other languages, and had taken the time out of his busy schedule to help him get a grasp on the language.

Dumbledore had said that some people take to the language charm better than others. A few rare people like the Head of the Department of Magical Cooperation, Barty Crouch, only need the charm on them for an hour or two before they could begin speaking fluently. Unfortunately, it seemed like Harry was on the other side of the spectrum as he had the charm placed on him for well over ten hours, and he still only had a rudimentary grasp of German. Harry didn't even want to think about what he would have done if it wasn't for Professor Dumbledore. Going to a new school in a foreign country was scary enough, but not even having the slightest grasp of the language would have been downright terrifying.

“All packed?” Lily asked.

“Yes,” Harry said as he levitated his trunk to the ground and took a seat at the table.

James smiled sadly at his son. It bothered him that one of his sons wouldn't be graduating from Hogwarts. “How long until your Portkey activates?”

“The letter that came with the Portkey said it will activate at ten this morning, so another twenty minutes or so,” Harry said after doing a quick tempus spell to check the time. “They said that someone will be waiting for me when I arrive, but I have no idea where I am going.”

“Durmstrang's location has been a secret since the school was built, Harry,” Lily commented. “I'm not surprised they won't tell you where it is until you are there.”

“It has to be somewhere in Germany,” Harry said certainly.

“That’s what everyone seems to think,” James agreed. “Albus knows, but he refuses to say. Something about an oath he took as a member of the ICW. With the sheer amount of heavy cloaks you had to buy, I think it’s somewhere in Northern Russia.”

“Maybe it’s in Siberia,” Nathan said, smiling slightly. “You’ll wish you were at Hogwarts if you’re stuck way up north freezing your butt off.”

“Language,” Lily chided. “I doubt Durmstrang is in Siberia, Harry. From my experience, purebloods seem to be rather...pampered.”

“Hey,” James protested indignantly.

Lily rolled her eyes. “Please, like you weren’t spoiled rotten as a child.”

“Just because my parents showed me a lot of affection...”

“James, had you and Sirius pooled your monthly allowances, you could have bought all the chocolate at Honeydukes. Anyway, Harry, the point is, I doubt Durmstrang, which is far more popular for purebloods, is going to be anywhere truly unbearable like Siberia.”

“I hope you’re right,” Harry mumbled.

“And if you’re stuck in Siberia, you can always transfer back to Hogwarts,” Nathan added.

That was the second time his brother had hinted that he should go back to Hogwarts in less than two minutes. If Nathan was trying to be subtle, he was not doing a very good job. “I’m not going back, Nathan.”

“But, but you might,” Nathan said hesitantly. “You never thought you’d leave Hogwarts, so you don’t know that you won’t hate Durmstrang.”

“I suppose you’re right, but I doubt it,” Harry said, trying to nicely convey the message to his brother that short of having an Unforgivable shot at him, he wasn’t going to be leaving Durmstrang. He’d seen what Hogwarts could offer him, and even if he was friendless at Durmstrang, at least he’d be able to study any magic he wanted there.

“Well, I still think you should think about it,” said Nathan. “Maybe you could ask Dumbled—”

“Nathan, enough, your brother is not going to be going back to Hogwarts,” James said. “Please try to accept that.”

Nathan looked ready to argue, but Harry quickly cut off whatever his brother was planning on saying. “Nathan, I don’t want to fight, but I’m not going back to Hogwarts.”

“This is stupid, you shouldn’t leave,” Nathan said with tears forming in his eyes.

Lily sighed. Sirius and Remus had told her that they had used an eavesdropping charm and that Nathan was taking Harry leaving very badly. “Nathan, this is your brother’s decision, and your father and I support him.”

“But, please Dad, I know you don’t want Harry to go to Durmstrang.”

“No, Nathan. I don’t like that your brother is going to Durmstrang,” James said honestly, “but the decision has been made.”

“Harry, just stay, please?” Nathan begged. “I’m sure Professor Dumbledore would let you back into Hogwarts.”

“Nathan,” Lily said sternly, “please don’t make this any harder for your brother.”

There was a soft chiming sound, and Harry took out the Portkey that Durmstrang had provided him. “Five minutes,” he said softly.

Lily pulled her older son into a tight hug. "Harry, please be safe, and write to your father and me often. We want to know that you're alright."

"I promise."

"Seriously, Harry, write often. I know what you said about your professors taking those oaths, but there are ways around everything," James said as he too hugged his son.

"I promise, Dad."

As the chiming sound got louder and Harry noticed his Portkey starting to glow, he turned to face his brother. "I guess I'll see you over the summer." Seeing the dejected look on Nathan's face, Harry quickly added, "but that's not so long from now. I even get out of school before you, so I'll be there on the platform when you get back from Hogwarts."

"Yeah, I suppose so," Nathan said turning away so that his brother wouldn't notice a few stray tears.

As the letter started to flash red, indicating that the Portkey would activate in ten seconds, Harry smiled at his family. "I love you, I promise to write and tell you everything about Durmstrang."

"Harry, I'm sorry," Nathan blurted out.

Confused, Harry turned to his face his brother. "Sorry about what?" he asked as the Portkey activated, taking him to Durmstrang.

"For everything," Nathan said softly to the now empty spot in the kitchen where his brother was standing not a second before.

A/N:

Alright, allow me to clear something up. Durmstrang will not be a Miranda Flairgold style super!school. Harry will not learn Necromancy,

Bloodmagic, or Soul Magic. Durmstrang is a school that teaches a curriculum similar to Hogwarts with the exception of having Spell Creation in place of Astronomy (which will be an elective during Harry's 3rd year). I always thought it was odd that Hogwarts didn't have a class on Spell Creation, especially since we know that it's possible to make your own spells. Please note that there will be nothing about Arithmancy or Ancient Runes involved in the Spell Creation class. Arithmancy is, according to canon, a means of doing divination with numbers, and Ancient Runes is a language.

Chapter 4: Durmstrang Spring will be up in 2-4 weeks.

Thanks to Stanzi and Howdy for doing the Beta work on this chapter. Also, thank you to the people over at DLP. This chapter wouldn't have been as good without your comments.

Oh, and don't be afraid, clicking the review box can't hurt you.

Chapter 4

Durmstrang Spring Part 1

A Cold Welcoming

Location Unknown, (Jan. 11th)...

Harry had used Portkeys before, so he thought he knew what to expect. While there was the typical jerk behind the navel as soon as the Portkey activated, he was not instantly deposited at his location like most of the Portkeys Professor Dumbledore had made for his family over the years. Instead, Harry was spun around in a swirling vortex for what seemed like several minutes. Harry was just starting to get dizzy from spinning around in circles when he felt his feet abruptly smash into the earth.

Harry hadn't fallen from a Portkey in years, and his experience with how to properly land was the only thing that saved him from collapsing in a heap on the ground.

Two things immediately assaulted Harry's senses the moment he landed. The first was that it was dark. If Durmstrang wasn't known to be somewhere in Europe, Harry would have sworn that he had traveled to the complete other side of the globe. He had left his home at ten in the morning, and it looked like the middle of the night where he had arrived. Looking up at the stars, Harry could perfectly see several constellations, and the only hint of light came from a faint reddish glow in the distance.

Knowing that he must be very far up north, Harry's senses quickly alerted him to something else. It was very cold. A sudden gust of wind kicked up, and Harry nearly screamed at the bone chilling rush of cold air. Cursing himself for not putting on the heavy furs he had been instructed to buy at Madam Malkins, Harry cast a warming charm, however, not even that was enough to completely keep out the cold. Desperately, Harry looked around for the Professor that was supposed to be meeting him.

"Impressive," commented a man with a Slavic accent, "I had thought you would fall like the rest of your countrymen. You haff much practice with Portkey travel, Potter?"

Harry turned in the direction of the voice, but he could only make out the slightest hint of a person standing in the darkness. Slowly, Harry's eyes began to adjust, and the speaker came into view. It was a fairly tall, yet thin, man dressed in very thick red robes. He had long dark hair that reached down from beyond a heavy fur hat, and a pair of cold dark eyes that didn't look like they belonged to anyone who ever smiled.

"A little, sir," Harry replied in German.

"Ah, you haff come prepared," the man replied, flawlessly switching to German. "That is good. I am Dominique Grausam, your instructor for the Dark Arts. Now, you follow me."

Harry nodded and began to follow his Professor down an icy path that seemed to wind through the snow around them. As they walked, Harry did his best to ignore the temperature by surveying the landscape around him. The dim light made it difficult to see very far, but Harry was fairly certain that he could make out mountains in the distance.

"Sir," Harry said, testing out his German. "It cold much here. No?"

Professor Grausam glared at Harry before saying, "You need more time with the language charm, Potter. That vos some of the most disgusting German I haff ever heard. Say in English if you are not able to speak decent German. At least then I do not feel the desire to hit you when you speak."

Harry couldn't stop his face from flushing in embarrassment. "It's a lot colder than I expected, sir."

"You are stupid, Potter," Grausem said mockingly, "Do you think ve tell you to buy heavy coat for fun?"

"Where are we, sir?" Harry tried to keep his voice respectful, but between the cold and his professors attitude, he was growing very impatient.

"Ve are in the Kautokeino province."

Harry stopped walking and looked at his professor in complete confusion. "Where?"

"Norway you stupid boy. Ve are in Northern Norway."

Surprised, Harry asked, "Sir, if we are in Norway, why did I need to learn German?"

Grausam sneered. "If everyone thinks that Durmstrang is somewhere traditionally German speaking, they don't look for school here."

Harry slowly thought out that logic. It actually made a lot of sense if you were seriously that paranoid.

"You will get your first look at the castle soon,."

Reaching the top of a large hill, Harry's mouth dropped open at the view. The reason for the reddish glow he had noticed earlier became all too apparent when he saw a massive row of torches that illuminated the road ahead. The path stretched for about a half a mile until it dead-ended into an intimidating four-story castle that stood out amongst the barren, snow-filled, terrain. In fact, with the exception of a nearby Quidditch stadium, Durmstrang was the only landmark that Harry could see anywhere.

"Umm...wow." Harry tried to hide his disgust at the uninspired looking fortress in the distance. While Hogwarts had a welcoming and majestic appearance, Durmstrang looked like it was built to withstand a siege. Large outer-walls defended the building and the interior structure had no impressive towers or monuments. Since it was smaller than Hogwarts, Durmstrang covered a much larger portion of ground and seemed to stretch for some distance. However, nowhere was Harry able to see any discernible change in architecture or design. In fact, Durmstrang appeared almost block like. Trying to

think of something to say, Harry simply muttered, "Ugh, are there wards?"

"Ja." Grausam sent a look of disgust at Harry for his unenthusiastic response at first seeing the school. "Ve are unplottable, and the Muggles think that this area is uninhabitable."

Harry had to bite his tongue to stop from telling his new professor that the Muggles had it right, and that this area should be uninhabitable. The remaining walk to the school was done in silence, and Harry got the impression that Grausam really did not like him. Wisely, Harry kept his thoughts to himself. It wouldn't do to antagonize a Professor on his first day at a new school.

As they entered the school, Grausam led Harry through a series of dark corridors. Unlike Hogwarts, Durmstrang did not have magical portraits hanging from its walls, nor did Durmstrang have the inviting feeling Harry had felt when he first arrived at Hogwarts. Durmstrang's corridors were lined with very formidable looking suits of armor, all of which were clutching some sort of dangerous looking weapons, and stone depictions of various magical creatures. The only lighting seemed to come from a series of torches on the walls, and these torches did nothing to provide any heat to the drafty corridors.

"That is the main hall," Grausam said gesturing to a pair of large, gold, double-doors to the right of them. "Velcoming feast is in an hour. You must be in attendance."

"Yes, sir."

"Make sure you cast language charm on yourself." Grausam instructed as Harry followed the man up an impressive central staircase. "German vill be used at all times, no exceptions. Using other language is punished by vhipping." Harry swallowed nervously, but Grausam seemed to ignore him as he continued talking. "Classes are on the first, second, and third floors. Student quarters are on the fourth. I take you to your room now."

"I get my own room?" Harry asked excitedly.

Grausam simply sneered in response to the question, and Harry had to struggle to keep up with the man's purposefully long steps. As they reached the fourth floor, Harry saw several older students speaking in rapid German with one another at the top of the staircase.

"You are blocking the stairs," Grausam snapped in German, causing the group of older students to quickly disperse. "Potter, girls' rooms are to the right of staircase, boys' rooms on the left. Rooms are alphabetical, password for your room is transfer, be in the Main Hall in one hour for welcome feast." The Dark Arts Professor gave Harry a final look of disgust before turning on his heel and going back down the stairs, leaving Harry to find his room.

With a sigh, Harry took a left and began walking down the long corridor. As he walked, he briefly glanced at some of the names on the doors, which were written in fire on top of each doorway. Most of the names seemed to hint at a Slavic and Germanic ancestry, and Harry was actually pleased that he didn't recognize any of them. If there weren't a lot of English students, maybe he wouldn't have to put up with a lot of questions about his brother.

After a few minutes of walking down the corridor, Harry had come to the conclusion that alphabetizing rooms by last name was great if your last name started with A, B, or C, but for everyone else it was a pain in the ass. At least the person who thought of alphabetizing the rooms was smart enough to periodically put bathrooms in the long corridor. Harry couldn't imagine the pain it would be to walk down the massive hallway every time he needed to use the loo or shower. Eventually, Harry reached a door that had the word "Potter" above it.

"Transfer," he mumbled. The lock clicked and Harry pushed the door open. Any joy that Harry had at having his own room disappeared instantly. This wasn't a room; it was a prison cell! The room consisted of a single cot pressed up against the right wall, a desk against the left wall, and a wardrobe against the back wall. There was a small window that looked only just big enough for an owl to squeeze through next to the wardrobe. The room couldn't have been twelve feet deep and ten feet across, and it was freezing cold. With a groan of frustration, Harry levitated his trunk to the ground and busily began unpacking his things.

Far sooner than Harry expected, it was time for him to begin making his way down to the Main Hall for the welcoming feast. Casting the language charm that Professor Dumbledore had taught him, Harry departed his room and joined the mass of students who were making their way down the stairs, presumably heading to the Main Hall.

Harry tried to listen in on some conversations as he followed the crowd of students into the Main Hall, but found that his German was still not all that great. While he recognized several words, the speed the language was being spoken at was still too much for him.

Entering the Main Hall, Harry's first impression was to roll his eyes. Several long tables lined the hall, much like Hogwarts; however, the staff table at the front of the hall was elevated slightly, demonstrating a symbolic message that the staff was superior to the students and would look down upon them. In the center of the staff table, sitting in a large, almost throne-like, chair was the Highmaster. Karkaroff was laughing at something one of his professors had told him, and Harry could make out the man's distinctly yellow teeth.

Quirrell had told him that the seating for the Professors at Durmstrang were based on their tenure, importance, and favor they held with the Highmaster, who basically ran the school as his own private kingdom. Spotting Grausam sitting near the far left of the table, considerably far from the Highmaster, Harry was secretly pleased to see that the grumpy Dark Arts teacher wasn't exactly high up in the Durmstrang pecking order.

Taking a seat near the middle of one of the tables, Harry watched as the hall slowly filled up with students. A few older students looked curiously at him before ultimately deciding to ignore him and go about their conversations.

Once everyone seemed to be seated, Karkaroff stood and immediately the hall fell silent. Harry was slightly impressed, the only person he had seen quiet a room that quickly was Dumbledore. "I have two announcements to make before we begin the feast," Karkaroff began. "We have a new student this term. Raise your glasses and welcome Harry Potter to Durmstrang."

As one, everyone seemed to raise their empty golden goblets in front of them and said, "Harry Potter," but immediately after the glasses were put down several mummers of conversation could be heard around the hall.

"Mr. Potter has come from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in Britain, and being..." Harry couldn't place the word Karkaroff said. "...and his excellent academic scores, he was deemed acceptable ... standards."

Most of the rumblings going on around the hall seemed to quell after Karkaroff's words, clearly whatever the Highmaster had said seemed to be accepted by most the students. "My second announcement is that due to the excessive ... that happened last fall. Using offensive magic in the corridors is punishable by ... and two days of ... now."

Harry was frustrated that he couldn't understand what Karkaroff was saying, however, judging from the utter silence and the look of shock on several people's faces, the students were clearly uncomfortable with whatever the punishment was. Harry felt the tiniest bit of apprehension as he reminded himself that Durmstrang was not like Hogwarts, and he did not want to get into any trouble.

"Now that the announcements have been taken care of, let the feast begin!" Karkaroff decreed, causing plates full of food to appear along the tables.

As Harry put some mash potatoes onto his plate, he noticed several students, who couldn't have been much older than himself, sending dark glances in his direction. When one of them met his eyes and mouthed 'half-blood' before spitting on the ground in disgust, Harry felt a surge of resentment. He had hoped that Durmstrang would have been different.

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How I Met My Friend

Transfiguration Classroom, Durmstrang, (Jan 12th)...

Dirty, frustrated, and tired, Harry made his way into his last class of the day.

His first day at Durmstrang had been as awful as it could possibly get. In Dark Arts, Harry had attempted to introduce himself, but he could tell a few students didn't like him from the moment he entered the classroom. While there were a lot more students who seemed initially accepting of him, his poor German made communicating difficult, and Professor Grausam did his best to ensure that none of the other first years liked him by the end of the class.

Grausam seemed to hold Hogwarts' Defense Against the Dark Arts class in contempt for some reason, and he ordered Harry to duel several students to prove he could keep up with the material. Harry had fought and beaten a quarter of the class before Grausam angrily told him to sit down and to stop showing off. For the rest of the class, Harry had to deal with the angry glares and bitter comments, only half of which he understood, from all the students he had beaten.

Herbology was the first class that Harry felt could be considered superior to Hogwarts. Since very few magical plants were able to grow in the arctic, the greenhouses at Durmstrang were enchanted to keep out the cold and the snow while protecting the artificial environment inside. There were dozens of these greenhouses with varied environments, and they allowed the students to experiment on many different exotic plants, even though the school's locations should have made that impossible.

While he was impressed by the system, Harry had struggled to understand what was happening in the class. Eventually, Harry realized that his teacher wanted him to transplant some Fanged Geraniums. Harry was bitten several times by the plant before, in his frustration, he blew a hole in the ground with a blasting curse and levitated the disgusting plant into it. Professor Guiles had not been pleased at Harry's unorthodox tactics in dealing with the ferocious plant, but since Harry hadn't technically done anything wrong, he wasn't punished. He was, however, ranted at for several minutes after class by Professor Guiles. The only thing Harry took from the

seemingly endless stream of angry German was that such methods were never accepted in Professor Guiles' greenhouse.

After his debacle in Herbology, Harry had eaten a brief lunch before heading off to his other first year class, Spell Creation. While initially excited at the idea of making his own spells, the moment Harry entered the classroom, Professor Cherny had given him an exam and told him to spend the class answering the questions while he lectured to everyone else. By the time the class ended, Harry was depressingly certain that he had answered only four of the twenty-two questions correct.

The entire first semester in Spell Creation was spent discussing how specific wand movements effect charms, transfiguration, and curses. With a very limited foundation to build upon, Harry didn't have a clue how to go about designing his own spells or altering existing ones. Professor Cherny seemed to have no interest in helping to catch him up, and Harry knew he'd need to work very hard if he wanted to pass the class.

Hoping to put an end to a very bad first day, Harry entered his Transfiguration classroom and took a seat near the back. Several students filtered in, and more than a few were surprised to see a first year sitting in their class. Several glared at him and even more asked him if he was lost. Fortunately, Professor Rosemburg entered from his office and the class settled down.

"As you all can see, Harry Potter will be joining us– " Rosemburg commented.

Before the professor could continue, the door opened and a fairly well-built black-haired boy entered the room, looking disheveled and embarrassed.

"Krum!" Rosemburg snapped angrily. "Why are you late to my class on the first day?"

"I'm sorry Professor, I was flying and I..."

"Fool! Do you really think I'll let you re-take this class again? Take a seat, and if you are late again I will ... with ... and I hope they will chew through your hands," Rosemburg snarled as most the class hid chuckles under their breaths.

"It will not happen again," Krum said as he turned to take a seat. Harry momentarily locked eyes with the boy and Krum seemed surprised to see someone new in the class. Krum weaved his way through the desks, and took a seat next to Harry.

"Now that Mr. Krum has graced us with his presence," said Rosemburg sarcastically, "we will begin. Several of you wrote to me over the holidays about your ... and I have to say that I am not ... with many of them. You are all ... and incapable of thought. Potter!" he said suddenly, causing Harry to jerk his head up. "Do you have any ... for your ... perhaps something from Hogwarts that can be shared?"

Harry had no idea what Professor Rosemburg was talking about. "Sir, my German is still not well. I have language charm on, but there is much I know not," he replied hesitantly.

"Idiot boy," Rosemburg barked. "You transferred to Durmstrang without knowing German? Did you think we would all speak English just for you, Potter?"

"No, sir, I not think that," Harry said quickly as most of the class laughed at his poor grammar and pronunciation.

"You are useless, Potter," Rosemburg said tiredly, "How can you learn if you don't even know what I am saying?"

"I try my best, sir," Harry said now slightly annoyed at being called useless. "Language Charm not working well for me, I practice with it for long time."

"To stupid for the language charm to work properly for you, Potter?" the boy in front of him asked quietly.

Harry wanted snap that the language charm had nothing to do with intelligence; Headmaster Dumbledore had insured him of that! It was just that certain people reacted differently to it, or had a talent with languages. No one knew why, it just happened that way.

"If you ... on being in my classroom," Rosemburg said, drawing Harry's attention back to the professor, "you will ... and be silent, Potter, understood?"

Harry didn't understand, but he nodded his agreement anyway as Rosemburg began to lecture. Harry tried to keep up with what was being said but it was hard.

"You do not understand?" Krum asked quietly.

Harry turned to face the older boy. "No," he whispered, "I need more time with the language charm. I will learn."

"Do you have class after this?" Krum asked, speaking slowly so Harry could understand.

"No."

"Then after class I will help you. The more time you spend speaking and hearing German, the easier it will get."

"German isn't your first language?"

Krum shook his head. "I am from Bulgaria, but we need ... attention, or else Professor Rosemburg will be angry with us."

The rest of the class was a struggle for Harry. By the time it was over, Harry understood that Professor Rosemburg was saying something about animate-to-animate Transfiguration, but a majority of the lecture was lost to him. Harry was very happy that Durmstrang didn't make him write many essays or take a lot of quizzes as there was no way he would have been able to answer anything over the lecture he just sat through.

When Professor Rosemburg announced the end of the class and instructed the students to read certain pages in their books before the next lecture, Krum stood up and motioned for Harry to follow him.

Krum led Harry out of the classroom and down the hall until they entered a pair of double doors that led to the Durmstrang library. Harry's eyes widened at the impressive collection of books and manuscripts that Durmstrang had collected. There were countless shelves filled with books that seemed to stretch to the ceiling. The thought of all those books, but being unable to read them was beyond frustrating to Harry, and he mentally committed himself to learning the language as quickly as possible.

"This way," said Krum, leading Harry through the library and into the back corner where a single table sat. Krum waved his wand and Harry looked at him, curious to see what the spell did. "A privacy charm," was Krum's abrupt response.

"Good idea. We wouldn't want to get kicked out."

"No, that would be very bad," Krum said darkly. "The librarian is very strict."

Harry nodded his head in understanding. If Madam Pince at Hogwarts had access to corporal punishment, who knows what she would had done to the students who disturbed the peace of her library.

"So...," Krum said awkwardly.

"Yeah, so..." Harry replied. "Do you not get along with the other kids here?"

"What makes you say that?" Krum asked defensively.

"Well," Harry said, trying not to upset the one person who had been nice to him. "Where I am from, friends would not laugh at you for getting yelled at by a professor."

Krum appraised Harry for a moment before nodding. "I suppose you are right. No, I do not get along with many. Most students think I am stupid after I dropped two classes during my first year."

"Why?" Harry asked curiously. "It is better to learn lots, no?"

"Yes, but I know what I want to do, and I did not need those classes."

"Oh?" Harry asked somewhat intrigued. "What do you want to do?"

"I have always wanted to become a great Quidditch player," Krum said wistfully.

"You sound like my brother." Harry laughed. "I think it's his dream to become a Quidditch star as well."

Krum scowled. "I do not dream about being great, I will be great. I run through the snow everyday to build strength, I practice every day to get better, and I study strategy every night to understand the game. I will become the greatest Quidditch player in the world."

Harry couldn't help but be impressed by Krum's determination. Nathan might have talked about being a great Quidditch player someday, but he didn't spend every waking moment pushing himself to become a great player like Krum was. Although, Harry mused, that was probably a good thing. Harry was sure his mother would kill Nathan if he spent every waking moment thinking about Quidditch.

"What position do you play?"

A slight smile crossed Krum's face. "Seeker. I have not lost a single match at Durmstrang."

"My brother plays seeker at Hogwarts, but he's not as dedicated as you. It is a lot of hard work to practice that much, no?"

"Yes," Krum said seriously. "I dropped Herbology and History of Magic after my first year to spend more time practicing. I was very worried I would fail Charms and Transfiguration last year, and I was fortunate that the professors decided to allow me to retake the

classes. I must graduate Durmstrang. Every Krum for six centuries has managed it. I cannot break my family's tradition, but I will not give up what I love. Since I dropped two classes in my first year, and I am retaking Charms and Transfiguration, people believe me to be stupid. They call me 'broomloon' and think I am some dumb Quidditch player. I will prove them all wrong someday."

Harry grinned; he knew exactly what Krum was talking about.

Seeing Harry's grin, Viktor snapped, "You think it is funny what they call me? You think my goal is stupid?"

Harry's smile vanished. "No, I do not think it is at all that. I-I can... relate," he said, quickly trying to find the right words in German. "At Hogwarts, I spend a lot of time studying. I want to be a great wizard. The other kids, they all mock me for doing well. I understand you wanting something and doing what you must to get it. I leave Hogwarts because Durmstrang let me move up in years and gives me access to more knowledge."

Krum no longer looked angry; instead, he had a very thoughtful look on his face. "We are much alike, then, Harry Potter. So, what is your favorite class?"

Slowly, a smile crept onto Harry's face as he told Krum what he liked the most about magic.

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Friendly Banter

Durmstrang Library, (Jan. 19th)

"Did you find what you were looking for?" Viktor asked, looking up from his Potions book.

Dropping back into his chair, Harry shook his head. "No, it was checked out. I had to get a book on transfiguration."

"Are you still having trouble reading German?"

"A little," Harry said hesitantly, "Reading is much easier than speaking however. I still think in English, and you say I will eventually think in German, yes?"

Viktor nodded. "Once you start thinking in German, that's when you know the language charm has completely worked. I don't think you have much longer though. If you can read German, then it shows your mind is slowly starting to grasp the language. It will probably take you another few days, but you are making good progress. You no longer have trouble understanding people, right?"

"Yes, I understand now, but it is even more frustrating." At Viktor's curious look, Harry tried to elaborate. "I know what people say, so I want to talk and answer questions, but I know I sound stupid. Like in Charms, I try to answer question from Professor Kosarev about engorgement charm, but I make little sense. I hear how dumb I sound, and I hate it."

Much to Harry's surprise, Viktor just smiled. "But don't you see Harry, that's a good thing. You recognize that your German is poor, and you will improve because of it. It is just like in Quidditch. If I fall for another Seeker's feint, I will do my best to not make the same error again."

Harry laughed. "How is it that you can relate everything to Quidditch?"

"It's a gift, Harry. Besides, do not pretend that you did not enjoy my match yesterday."

Harry knew that Viktor was right. Quidditch at Durmstrang was an incredible spectacle. The entire school was obligated to attend every match, and often people who didn't care for the sport spent the time catching up on their homework. In order for the players to see properly during the night, the stadium was spelled with thousands of overhead lights, which, combined with the snow covered pitch, illuminated the entire field in an eerie white glow.

Since there were no houses to separate students, the teams represented a faculty member, who retained an incredible amount of

control over the team. Winning the Quidditch cup was often more important to the faculty than the students at Durmstrang, and the professors took the game very seriously. They would routinely watch their teams practice and were known to remove their team's captain if they felt he wasn't selecting the best players for the team.

Viktor had been spotted during his first year doing intense aerial maneuvers by the Charms Master, Professor Kosarev, and, within a week, he had won the spot of starting seeker on the Charms team. In the only match Harry had seen so far, Viktor had led a Bludger right into the face of an opposing Beater, breaking the boy's nose and sending him flying off his broom. Later, Viktor had managed to trick the opposing Seeker into crashing into a box full of fourth year students, causing a few injuries to the students and knocking the other team's Seeker out of the match. Needless to say, Harry had been awed by his friend's ability on a broomstick.

"Yes, it was a good match," Harry admitted. "Have they released the other Seeker from the Hospital Wing yet?"

"No. I heard he fractured his skull. Stupid sixth-year should have known not to mark me so closely."

"You can be scary sometimes Viktor."

"I know," Viktor replied. "It is another gift."

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Acceptance Is Unacceptable

Transfiguration Classroom, (Jan. 22nd)

"Potter," Professor Rosemburg called out, "stay after for a moment."

Harry bid Viktor goodbye and waited for everyone to filter out of the room. When he was alone with the Transfiguration Professor, Rosemburg smiled. "I must say, Potter, I am impressed. When I heard that a first year was to be entering my third year class, I thought it had to be a mistake. Your contributions to the discussion

today tells me otherwise. Where exactly did you learn about using Transfiguration in duels?"

"It was just something I read about at Hogwarts, sir," Harry replied, happy that his German had finally become passable.

"Mr. Potter." Rosemburg smirked. "I am somewhat familiar with the Hogwarts curriculum, and I know that battle-transfiguration is not a part of it. So, please, be honest."

"I really like transfiguration, sir, and I looked up a lot of advanced transfigurations on my own time." Technically, that was true, Harry thought. Professor Quirrell never specifically told him what to study in order to prepare for his 'lessons.' It was just something Harry had thought might be helpful. Unfortunately, the spells were far too advanced for him, but that didn't mean that Harry didn't find the entire idea fascinating.

"I see, well, I'm rather impressed, Mr. Potter. Tell me, have you ever tried any of the spells you mentioned today?"

"No sir, the spells all seemed really complicated, and I didn't have the time to practice them."

"Good. You could have hurt yourself trying to do that kind of advanced transfiguration. I'd say you are still a few years away from trying anything along those lines, Potter, but it is still impressive that you have actually researched the spells. Tell me, have you had any problems with the end of the year spell list so far?"

"I've only practiced a couple of them, sir, but the first few haven't been that difficult."

"Show me." Rosemburg took out a small mouse from one of his desk's drawers and placed it on the table. "Turn this mouse into another animal."

After a moment's hesitation, Harry waved his wand over the frantic creature, and, immediately, the small mouse's body began to shift

and contort. The mouse's white fur soon became a sickly green skin, its head grew several inches, and the creature's legs coiled back.

Rosemburg cast a freezing charm on the toad to prevent it from hopping off his desk, and he began to closely inspect the creature. "A good job," he said slowly. "The only flaw I can detect is that the toad's eyes are somewhat pinkish."

"I'll work on it, sir."

"You do that Potter. I traditionally like to see my third years turn a rat into a cat or animal of that size by the end of the year. Right now I'd say you are a little behind the rest of the class in practical application, but if you work hard, you should be able to catch up by the end of February. If you need help with anything or have any questions, my door will be open to you."

"Thank you, sir," Harry said gratefully.

"Oh, and Potter, I'm glad that you were able to get the language issue resolved. I had hoped to talk to you about your place in the class after the first lesson, but with your rudimentary knowledge of German, it would have been a waste of my time."

"I understand," Harry said honestly, "thankfully Viktor was able to help me with the language charm."

"Krum?" Rosemburg asked in surprise.

"Yes, sir."

"Whatever works I suppose. Have a good day, Potter."

Nodding his head, Harry quickly left the room in a great mood. The language charm had finally taken, and today was the first time he had been able to properly communicate with his professors. While Grausam still seemed to strongly dislike him, and Professor Cherny continued to ignore his very existence, Professor Guiles had been pleased with his work in Herbology, and, clearly, Professor

Rosemburg had been impressed with his transfiguration knowledge. Overall, Harry thought that the day couldn't have gone much better.

Turning the corner, Harry walked down the corridor that lead to the main staircase. As he was passing an empty charms classroom, however, he was violently slammed into the wall. Dazed, Harry dropped his bag, and he felt two sets of hands grab him. Before he realized what was happening, he was lifted up and tossed unceremoniously into the unoccupied Charms classroom.

Picking himself up off the floor, Harry turned around when he heard the door to the classroom slam shut. Facing him were four third-years from his transfiguration class, and they all had their wands pointed at him.

"I think we need to talk Potter," a large boy said casually as his three friends glared at Harry. "You see, I don't think you properly understand how things work at Durmstarng. You might be in our transfiguration class, but that doesn't mean you get to show us up."

"I didn't show yo—"

"Silencio," the boy said. "I was talking, Potter. Didn't your Mudblood mother ever tell you that it's rude to interrupt your betters?"

"I doubt it Marcos," another boy said. "Bitch probably spent too much time on her knees servicing his dad."

"True," Marcos replied, "How else could a Mudblood convince a Pureblood to sully their family line. Your mother must have a wonderful tongue, Potter."

Enraged, Harry drew his wand, only to be immediately disarmed by the second boy.

"What exactly were you planning on doing with this?" The boy mockingly asked, twirling Harry's wand.

Harry looked between the four boys warily. With no wand, he was a sitting target for them to curse at will.

"Now, Potter, before your violent little outburst, we were having such a pleasant conversation. We don't want to hurt you, but you seem to have it in your head that you're a real wizard. You're not. You're a half-blood, which means you're only half a wizard, and half-wizards can't do as well as real wizards. That just doesn't make any sense, does it?"

The boy currently twirling Harry's wand took a threatening step forward. "It's time that you begin showing the proper respect to your betters Potter, and you can start by not being such a fucking know-it-all. We know you probably inherited your mother's talented mouth, and you are probably eager to start sucking Rosemburg's cock, but that doesn't mean you get to do better than us. So, do we understand each other, Potter? Finite."

Fighting the urge to charge the boys with his fists for insulting his mother, Harry growled out, "I am not trying to make you look bad."

"Potter, Potter, Potter," Marcus said sadly. "This isn't a debate. Do you understand us or do we need to teach you a lesson?"

Looking between the four boys and their wands, Harry knew he should probably just agree and get out of this situation. He was disarmed and in an empty classroom, but he didn't come all the way to Durmstrang just to be intimidated into doing badly. Besides, Harry refused to give them the satisfaction of mocking him and his mother. He wasn't a half-wizard, he was better than them, and they knew it. "No," he spat, "It's not my fault you're all so stupid that you can't do better than a first year."

Harry knew it was unnecessary to mock them, but he didn't care, they were going to curse him anyway.

"Fuck you, Potter," Marcos snarled, "let's see how much better you are when you can't make it to class! Perco—"

Diving to the side, Harry hoped to avoid Marcos' first spell; however, before the curse could be completed, the door to the room burst open. From his spot on the ground, Harry looked up in time to see Marcos

get blasted into the teacher's desk, and he didn't make to get up. Immediately, two other boys dropped to the ground from a pair of stunning spells, and Harry noticed that his wand was only a few feet away from him.

Without hesitation, Harry got to his feet and sprinted for his wand. Grabbing it, Harry stood up, and was halfway through the incantation for the full-body bind when the last boy crumpled to the floor unconscious. Turning to see who had helped him, Harry was surprised to Viktor standing over the fallen third year.

"Harry," Viktor asked in concern, "are you alright?"

"What are you doing here?" Harry asked trying to stop his body from shaking slightly.

"I saw your bag was ripped open outside the door, and I heard you speaking to people inside."

"Y-you helped me? W-why?"

Viktor frowned. "You're my friend."

"Oh," Harry said in embarrassment, "I-I thought you just wanted to help me with the language charm. I didn't think you'd actually want to... just never mind."

"Do you need to go to the hospital wing?"

"No." Harry gestured to the four third-years "What do we do about them?"

"Leave them," Viktor spat, "they'll wake up eventually. Come on, let's go get some dinner."

"Okay...thank you Viktor."

"You are welcome Harry."

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Learning Your Place

Durmstrang Library, (Jan. 31st)...

"Hello, Lady Doktor," Harry said giving the resident Durmstrang librarian a charming smile. If there was one similarity between Hogwarts and Durmstrang, it was that both schools' librarians loved to talk –and brag– about their library. Harry had managed to endear himself to the normally short-tempered Durmstrang librarian after they had gotten into a long discussion about the differences between the Hogwarts and Durmstrang libraries. Lady Doktor was disgusted by Hogwarts' Restricted section, and she was very pleased when Harry told her that one of the reasons he came to Durmstrang was that they didn't have such a thing.

"Harry." Lady Doktor smiled at the boy. "What can I help you with today?"

"I'm returning this book," Harry said, placing a very heavy tome on animate-to-animate Transfiguration on the woman's desk.

With a wave of her wand, the book flew off her desk, presumably going back to where it belonged in the massive Durmstrang library. "Very well, is there anything else I can help you with?"

"Do you have any good books on revealing Charms?"

"Yes, one was just returned a few days ago." Lady Doktor casually summoned the book from one of the shelves behind Harry. "Would you like it?"

Harry nodded his head, and he soon found himself buried in the book's pages. The tome described everything from a simple 'Finite' charm that would reveal basic codes and hidden text, to the more advanced revealing spells such as *Homenum Revelio*, which would reveal any human near the caster, regardless of Disillusionment Charms or Invisibility Cloaks.

Glancing at his watch, Harry shook his head. Viktor was late again.

Ever since Viktor had saved him, Harry had done his best to repay his friend. Since he was in Viktor's Charms class, along with Transfiguration, Harry had decided to help his friend do better academically. While Viktor had already taken the classes, he had ignored the theoretical portion of Charms and Transfiguration for a long time, and it was partially the reason for his poor mastery of the spells. Since Harry had a strong background in theory, he did his best to help Viktor grasp some of the concepts that went over his head.

At first, Viktor tried to deny that he needed the help, but Harry wouldn't take no for an answer. Eventually, Harry was able to argue that the better Viktor understood his Charms and Transfiguration theory, the easier the spells would be to cast, which would mean more time for him to play Quidditch and less time practicing spells. While it wasn't exactly true that learning theory made spells casting easier, Harry suspected that Viktor just needed an excuse to mentally justify accepting the help of someone three years younger than him.

Finishing up a very interesting chapter on the Homorphus Charm – a powerful spell that will force an animagus to retake their original appearance – Harry put the book in his bag. It appeared like Viktor had lost track of time again while practicing Quidditch. Getting up to go back to his room, Harry was thinking about the benefits of using the Homorphus Charm to stop his uncle Sirius from pranking him over the summer when he heard someone hiss, "Ossis Fragmen."

A moment later, Harry was on the ground screaming, his bag blasted clean off his shoulder as the bone breaking curse smashed into his scapula.

"Stay down, Mr. Potter," Lady Doktor commanded as she drew her wand and came out from behind her counter to search for the person who cast the curse. Harry didn't need to be told, it wasn't as if he thought he could get up anyway. Slowly, the pain in his back increased until it became too much for him, and he passed out.

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The Megara Mystery

Hospital Wing, Durmstrang, (Feb. 1st)...

Noise.

At some-point, Harry's senses became aware of it, and, slowly, he began to wake up. While he was groggy, the sounds around him became progressively clearer. There was a man and a woman, and it sounded like they were arguing.

"...can not send out that letter!"

"I am following your policy ... no choice in the matter."

"... was something else ... bone breaking curse ... like someone was actually trying to harm the boy."

"... what other purpose for using a bone-breaking curse ... wanted Mr. Potter hurt!"

At the mention of his name, Harry opened his eyes. He was laying face down on an uncomfortable bed with white sheets. Turning his head to the side, he saw numerous other beds lining the room. He was in the infirmary.

Slowly, the memory of what had happened in the library returned, and Harry became acutely aware of a horrible stabbing pain in his back. It felt like his back was covered in splinters and someone was periodically ripping them out, only to immediately replace them again. He grimaced and let out a slight whimper of pain, which quickly alerted the other occupants of the room of his consciousness.

"Mr. Potter? Mr. Potter can you hear me?"

Harry saw a large woman looking down at him in concern.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Good," the woman replied happily, "I am Lady Shluga, the matron of the hospital wing. Now, Mr. Potter, you were hit with a bone breaking

curse, and the damage was severe. I spent most of last night carefully vanishing all traces of the destroyed bone, and I dosed you with Skele-grow to replace your scapula. I'm sorry to say that you're going to be in for an uncomfortable few hours."

"Did you catch who did it?" Harry asked. He sincerely hoped that whoever cursed him was feeling just as much pain as he was at the moment.

"No," the Highmaster said, stepping forward. "We tried to find the person responsible, but the situation quickly drew the attraction of many students, and it's likely that your attacker slipped in amongst them to pose as a merely curious onlooker."

Harry felt his temper flair. Here he was getting his back rebuilt, and they hadn't even caught the person responsible. Did they even try? When he told his parents...

His parents!

If they found out that he was attacked within his first month of school, they'd have him out of Durmstrang within an hour. Biting his lip, Harry asked, "Do my parents know what happened?"

A worried expression appeared on Lady Shluga's face. "I was just about to send out the notice to your parents, Mr. Potter. I was too busy last night making sure that the various bone shards were not threatening any of your organs. However, now that you are out of danger and conscious, I will let them know of your condition."

"No," Harry said quickly, "please don't!"

"What?" Lady Shluga asked in confusion before turning to glare at the Highmaster. "Did you threaten the poor boy."

"I have done no such thing," Karkaroff said dangerously, "and you should remember your place, Yvanna."

Lady Shluga immediately paled. "My, my apologies Highmaster. I, I simply get worked up over the health of my patients."

Turning to look at Harry, Karkaroff smiled slightly, showing his yellow teeth. "Why don't you want a notice to be sent out, Mr. Potter?"

"My parents will withdraw me from Durmstrang if they find out, sir. They, well, it took Professor Dumbledore convincing them that I would be safe here to even let me attend. I really do like it here, sir, and I don't want to leave."

Karkaroff flinched slightly at the mention of Dumbledore. Most of the world saw Albus Dumbledore as a gentle and kind-hearted old man; however, Igor saw the other side of Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore.

He saw the man who could casually appear inside of Durmstrang's wards by means of that filthy Phoenix companion of his. He saw the man who had once effortlessly set him on fire during a duel in Hogsmeade. He saw the man with more political connections than anyone in the world. Finally, he saw the man who had a lifetime's worth of blackmail on him, and had no qualms about using it to get his way.

Igor did his best to force the memory of Dumbledore threatening to turn him over to the Russians for the role he played in the Leningrad Massacre of 1980. The old man had given him a simple quid pro quo. Keep Harry Potter safe...or be prepared to spend the rest of his life slaving away in a warded gulag.

Knowing he had no choice and that it was too late to rescind Potter's acceptance, Igor increased the restrictions on performing magic in the halls. It was typically tradition for all first years to undergo a hazing of sorts during their time at Durmstrang. The professors would turn a blind eye towards any student who sent a spell at a first year, provided they kept it within reason.

That could not be allowed with Harry Potter. If a student took it too far and Potter was hurt... Naturally, Igor had tightened the restrictions about casting spells in the hallway, and he made certain to make an example out of the first brat to break his rule. He had also explained to the faculty that Harry Potter was to be monitored carefully.

Now Potter was in the infirmary with a broken scapula, and the matron wanted to inform the boy's parents. That simply could not happen. "Yvanna, clearly, Mr. Potter doesn't want his parents to know what happened. Surely you can make an exception in this one case."

Lady Shluga looked between the Highmaster's decidedly dangerous stare and the Potter boy's pleading eyes. She had been prepared to cross Karkaroff if he attempted to force her to not send the letter out. It would have probably cost her position, but she was a good healer, and she would find another job. However, if the Potter boy didn't want his parents to know that someone had viciously cursed him... well, she couldn't justify losing her job for someone that didn't even want her help. "Very well Highmaster, it will be as you wish. Now, Mr. Potter, I believe you have a visitor."

"Really?" Harry glanced over at a clock and saw that it was almost ten in the morning. Viktor would be at Quidditch practice, so who would bother visiting him? "Who?"

"A Ms. Megara. I shall tell her that you are awake. She's just doing some homework in my office right now."

As Lady Shluga walked away, Karkaroff grinned down at Harry. "I'm glad that we don't need to let anyone know about this unfortunate situation, Mr. Potter, and I'm pleased that you are so far enjoying your time at Durmstrang."

"Um, thank you, sir," Harry replied as he tried to figure out who Ms. Megara was, and why she would be visiting him.

"My best on your recovery, Harry," the Highmaster said before leaving the infirmary.

The door to Lady Shluga's office opening directed Harry's attention away from the retreating Highmaster, and he noticed the matron of the infirmary walking towards him; however, when Harry got his first look at this visitor, he felt his heart skip a beat. His visitor was a very attractive third or fourth year girl with olive skin, shoulder length brown hair, and hazel eyes. She was carrying a book on Spell

Creation under her arm, and appeared to be annoyed about something.

"As you can see Ms. Megara, Mr. Potter is awake. Now, I've got some paperwork to take care of, so why don't I just leave you two here to talk."

"Thank you Lady Shluga," the girl said sweetly.

"Who are you?" Harry asked curiously.

The girl waited until Lady Shluga was back in her office before replying, "Shut up Potter. I doubt you want to be here, but I really don't want to waste my time babysitting you. So, don't speak to me. In fact, don't even look at me."

Harry simply stared at the girl in disbelief. "W-What?"

Sighing, the girl sat down in a chair near Harry's bed and took out her wand. "Silencio."

Harry tried to scream for help, but nothing would come out of his mouth. He looked up at the girl in horror, thoughts of being cursed in his own hospital bed raced through his mind. Was this girl the person who cursed him in the library? Was she here to finish him off?

Noticing his wand on the end table next to him, Harry was about to make a desperate drive for it when the girl said, "By Zeus, Potter would you stop fidgeting? I'm trying to study!"

Stunned, Harry stopped moving and looked back at the girl. She was just sitting there, not even paying him the slightest bit of attention. After a few tense moments where the girl didn't even lift her eyes from the book she was reading, Harry realized that the girl was not a threat to him, but why was she here? And why had she silenced him?

The two sat together in complete silence, the only sound coming from the girl turning the pages of her book. Harry continued to observe the girl, unsure of what to think about her.

"I told you to not look at me."

Harry simply raised an eyebrow and continued to look at the rapidly bothered girl.

"Do you want me to curse you Potter?"

Frustrated and annoyed at the girl's attitude, Harry was about to throw an extra pillow at her when the door to the infirmary opened, and Viktor walked inside.

He was still wearing his Quidditch uniform, and was sweating slightly; however, Harry was never happier to see a familiar face. Viktor, likewise, appeared pleased to see him. "Harry, you're awake!"

Harry was about to motion to his throat, signaling that he couldn't talk, when he heard the girl mutter a quiet "finite," removing the silencing spell.

With his voice returned and confident that Viktor would help him if she started throwing spells, Harry turned to face the girl. "What the hell is your problem!"

The girl simply ignored Harry's outburst before standing up and walking over to Viktor. "You smell, and shouldn't you be at practice for another hour?"

"A few of my teammates will be joining Harry in the infirmary shortly." Viktor grinned. "Maybe the next time I ask for a practice to be rescheduled they will listen to me."

"You two know each other?" Harry asked his friend in surprise.

Viktor laughed. "Kira is my girlfriend Harry. I thought it would be a good idea for you to have a friendly face around when you woke up. Since I had to go to practice, I asked her to stay here."

"Yeah, she's real friendly," Harry muttered under his breath.

Kira glanced at Harry with disdain. "Better than you deserve half-blood."

"Kira," Viktor scowled, "apologize."

For a second, Harry thought Kira was going to laugh at the suggestion, but then she saw the serious expression on Viktor's face. "Sorry Potter," she said unconvincingly. "Happy Viktor? Now, I'm leaving." Without a second glance, Kira swiftly grabbed her book and walked out of the infirmary.

"So," Harry said uncomfortably, "how long have you been dating her?"

"Since October." Viktor replied. "She's normally not like that."

"Is she a fourth year as well?"

"No, although she is in fourth year spell creation, she is a third year. She and I have been good friends ever since I stopped some students in our second year spell creation class from picking on her. I had hoped that you two would have gotten along better."

"Yeah, what did I ever do to make her so upset with me? I haven't even seen her before."

"Kira," Viktor said slowly as if deciding how much to tell his new friend, "is very competitive. She has constantly ranked among the best students in Spell Creation, and she is one of the better duelists in her Dark Arts class. I believe she is slightly jealous of your placement into two third year classes. And, well, I had hoped that she would keep her opinions on blood to herself, but she strongly disapproves of anyone who is not a pureblood being accepted at Durmstrang."

"Why?"

"Kira's family is from Greece, and they have one of the oldest pureblood lineages in Europe; however, her family is unique in many ways."

"Unique how?"

"It is not my place to say, Harry." Viktor said with finality.

Harry wondered exactly what kind of family situation would make Kira dislike him. He had never even heard of the Megara family, and he didn't think they were death eaters. "Well, as long as you like her, and she is...well, what I mean to say is, ugh, well, you know."

"Yes?" Viktor grinned. "She is what?"

Feeling his face heat up slightly, Harry muttered, "She is kind of pretty."

Viktor smiled. "Yes, yes she is, but enough about Kira. How long are you going to be in the hospital wing for and did they catch the person responsible?"

Before Harry could answer, the doors to the hospital wing burst open and three dirty and bruised boys began levitating three other boys into beds. Harry noticed that all the boys were wearing the same Quidditch uniform as Viktor, who was smirking at the scene.

"Did you do all that?"

"Yes," Viktor said proudly, "I'm actually surprised that they were able to get Lucas out of the ground so fast. I had thought he would've been buried for at least an hour."

Harry's eyes widened. How did someone get buried during Quidditch practice?

Seeing his friend's curious expression, Viktor said, "Trust me, Harry, you don't want to know."

A/N: As always, thanks to the people on DLP, and my ever growing number of Betas.

Chapter 5: Durmstrang Spring part 2 should be out in my typical update time, which is 2-4 weeks.

Oh, and Review people! Without reviews I might just go insane and turn Durmstrang into a ballet academy! Harry could be the lead dancer and, eventually, Voldemort will be brought in to teach him the perfect pirouette!

Chapter 5

Durmstrang Spring Part 2

Taking Steps and Making Acquaintances

Harry's Room, Durmstrang, Feb. 15th

It had been over two weeks since Harry spent his first night in the Durmstrang infirmary, and he was committed to making sure his first visit was his last.

While Lady Shluga had healed him, his first month at Durmstrang had Harry on guard. He knew that he hadn't made a lot of friends at Durmstrang – in fact, if one discounted Viktor, he hadn't made any friends. The fact that Harry was slowly starting to become one of the top students in most of his classes only seemed to further antagonize his classmates. In a place as competitive as Durmstrang, a new, successful, student –who just happened to be a half-blood– was bound to make a few people angry.

Harry had hoped to try to discover the identity of his attacker immediately after being released. He and Viktor had discussed it, and, unfortunately, they came had come to the conclusion that it would be impossible unless the attacker was stupid enough to brag about it. Harry was taking classes with first, second, and third years, and any of them could have been behind the attack. While it was highly unlikely for a first, second, or third year could properly cast the bone-breaking curse, most students had some kind of family connection to someone else at Durmstrang.

Fortunately, most of the upper-year students at Durmstrang didn't bother with the squabbling of the younger students. By the time sixth and seventh year came around, the pecking order for upper-class students was well established, and they were more worried about completing their advanced final projects or angering another upperclassman than paying attention to what some first year was doing. Still, there were always exceptions, and if an upperclassman was responsible, Harry knew that he was going to be in for a long and dangerous year.

Harry had been initially hesitant to wander around the school following the attack; however, after the first week, he realized something important. If his peers thought they could get away with cursing him, what would stop them from trying again? Harry loathed the thought of having to sneak around the school when he was alone, or having to plan his schedule around Viktor so that people would be less likely to attack him. When Viktor wasn't available, Harry retreated to the library where Lady Doktor kept a very sharp eye on him.

If the Durmstrang librarian had been short-tempered to students before the attack, she was now outright hostile to anyone who had their wands out. Harry wished that he could say that the librarian was upset that he had been injured under her watch, but that just wasn't the case. While Lady Doktor had treated Harry better than most students at Durmstrang, it was obvious she was enraged that anyone would dare use an offensive spell near her books. Harry had witnessed her on three separate occasions threaten students with detention for simply practicing the wand movements for spells, or for casting a warming charm without her permission.

The one positive aspect that came from Lady Doktor's intense scrutiny was that fewer students were visiting the library. Also, since Lady Doktor knew that Harry hadn't been the person who sent the curse, he was treated slightly better than the majority of the other students. This allowed him to spend a lot of time undisturbed in the library, and he began to browse through the Dark Arts section. Even if he wasn't interested in learning anything really dangerous or dark, Harry figured if people saw him looking at or reading a lot of books known for dark curses, they wouldn't think to pick a fight with him.

Viktor helped him when he could, and Harry discovered that his friend wasn't universally poor at all his classes. It turned out that Viktor's swift defeat of the four third-years in the abandoned Charms classroom was by no means a stroke of luck. The intense conditioning and reflex training Viktor did to practice for Quidditch actually made him a very talented duelist.

Beyond his superior physical conditioning, Viktor had another advantage over other duelists: his curses were abnormally strong. In

fact, Harry suspected that his friend's negative emotions towards so many of his peers actually contributed to the power behind his curses. When he tried it, Harry found that getting angry at his mysterious attacker before casting a curse would indeed boost the strength of the spell.

"Flagrate." he whispered, sending a streak of thin fire from his wand. Flicking his wand, Harry manipulated the fire into spelling out his name before snapping it back into a thin whip of fire. It was a trick he had learned from studying the flaming names above the student quarters. It had taken him a while, but eventually Harry figured out the fire was done by manipulating the Flagrate spell.

Still manipulating the small dancing flame, Harry left his room and walked down the long corridor towards the main staircase. As he got closer to the stairs, he spotted some students from his Dark Arts class. Harry noticed that a few of them had their wands out and seemed to be practicing a spell. Still slightly on edge from his attack, and unsure if they were going to try to hit him with whatever they were practicing, Harry jabbed his wand at the group and sent his small flame whip at them. The other first years barely avoided the fire, and quickly ran off as fast as they could, all the while shouting insults at Harry.

Seeing a professor walk up from the main staircase, Harry immediately canceled the spell. While he was all for letting his peers know that he could defend himself, Harry didn't want to get into any trouble for casting an offensive spell in the corridors. Viktor had told him what had been done to a fifth year student who had been caught casting a Jelly-Legs jinx on a first year, and it had given Harry nightmares for a week.

Shaking off the thought of being strapped to a rack, Harry did his best to focus on the task at hand.

Entering the library, Harry saw that Lady Doktor wasn't at her usual post. Instead, her assistant, a slimy man by the name of Nikolai Polanski, stood there, and Harry did his best to not look at him. Viktor mentioned that Polanski was once the librarian at Beauxbatons. He had been suspected of dosing a first year with love potion and taking

them back to his quarters. Because the girl was a Muggle-born and Polanski was a pureblood, the French Ministry of Magic allowed him to remain at home under house arrest while awaiting trial. Just prior to his trial, several other students came forward and accused him of giving them love potions when they were at Beauxbatons. Fearing that he could be facing face serious jail time in France, Polanski fled to his cousin Igor, who provided him with sanctuary at Durmstrang, much to the annoyance of an irate French Ministry of Magic.

Walking into the section on the Dark Arts, Harry looked around for a something good to read. He was currently considering an interesting book titled *Sonnets of a Sorcerer*. Harry was about to open it when a voice casually said, "I wouldn't do that if I were you, Potter."

Turning to his right, Harry saw a girl around his age reading the titles in a slightly more advanced part of the Dark Arts section.

"Why not?"

The girl turned to face him. She had black hair that reached past her shoulders, light blue eyes that were almost grey, and a plain face that didn't particularly stand out amongst the hundreds of other students Harry had so far seen at Durmstrang. It took a moment, but Harry eventually recognized her from his Spell Creation class. She was one of the quiet people who rarely, if ever, spoke up, and so far hadn't bothered him. Harry thought her name was Calypso, but he wasn't sure since she seemed content to keep to herself in their only shared class.

"*Sonnets of a Sorcerer* was written by a rather vengeful Irish wizard in the 1600s. He cursed every copy he made so that if you read the book, you are forever forced to speak in limericks," she commented. "But, by all means, go ahead and read it if you want."

Harry quickly put the book back on the shelf. "Thanks for telling me."

"I noticed you've been spending more time in this section," she said conversationally. "Any reason why? Typically, you stick to Transfiguration and Charms. Or is that only when you are tutoring Krum?"

"I don't tutor Viktor," Harry said, doing his best to mask his discomfort. He wasn't sure how a girl he had never spoken to could know so much about his study habits. Was she watching him or something?

"What would you call a student explaining something to another student who knew less than them? Or are you going to tell me that Krum is actually your equal in Transfiguration, and he just lets you explain everything to him to test that you know it?"

Harry blushed slightly. "Alright, so maybe I help him out, but 'tutor' makes it sound like he couldn't do it on his own. All I do is help him grasp the theory faster. That way he can spend more time playing Quidditch."

"How... benevolent of you, Potter," Calypso replied as she pulled a book from the shelf. "This has several interesting curses in it. If you're half as decent in the Dark Arts as you are in Charms and Transfiguration, they shouldn't be too much of a problem for you. The spells are somewhat visual in their effects, so if you're trying to send a message that people shouldn't send bone-breaking spells at your back, this should help." Harry reached out and took the book with a thankful expression on his face. After quickly flipping through the first few pages, he looked up to thank Calypso, but she was already gone.

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Harry's room, Durmstrang, Feb. 16th

A soft tapping against the only window in his room caused Harry to look up from his desk. Outside, just barely able to remain flying in the snowstorm, was a brown owl that he immediately recognized as being from Hogwarts. Quickly standing Harry opened his tiny window, allowing the tiny owl to flutter inside.

"I'm sorry I don't have any owl treats for you, but if you go to the owlery you can rest and get some food before you have to go back to Hogwarts," Harry told the tired-looking creature, who simply hooted in response.

After removing the letter from the owl and letting it back outside to find its way to the owlery, Harry sat down on his bed to read.

Harry,

That's awesome that your friend is a Seeker. He must be pretty good to pull off that kind of maneuver with a Bludger. I never would have thought of timing my flying to get a Bludger to stay close enough to me so that I could use it as a weapon against an opposing player. I'll have to ask Fred or George to help me practice that. I'm sure Oliver will appreciate the potential advantage it could give us. I promise that I won't tell Mum that it was you who told me about it.

I'm glad things are working out for you at Durmstrang, but I still wish you were here.

The reason I'm writing though is that I have a question. Have you ever heard of someone named Nicholas Flamel? Hermione, Ron, and I have been looking for information about him for a while, but we can't seem to find anything. So anything you know would be a great help.

Hope you aren't too cold in Siberia.

Nathan

Harry laughed at his brother's final line. He had told Nathan that he was right and that Durmstrang was in Siberia, and it seemed like his brother was buying it. Harry had written his parents and explained how he couldn't tell them where Durmstrang was; however, he also mentioned that Nathan would probably be writing them soon, claiming that he was right and that Durmstrang was in Siberia. His dad had written back, praising him for pranking his brother from a thousand miles away, and his mother had reluctantly agreed not to tell Nathan about the prank.

Harry thought the question about Nicholas Flamel was odd. The only Flamel Harry had ever heard of was the alchemist who helped Professor Dumbledore work on the twelve uses of dragon's blood. Scribbling a quick response to his brother, and making sure to include a warning about not killing himself practicing insane Quidditch moves,

Harry went down to the owlery to send his response with a Durmstrang owl.

ooo0000ooo

The Agreement

Durmstrang Library, Feb. 24th

"So you're going to be traveling around all summer playing Quidditch?" Harry asked, trying to hide his disappointment. He had hoped to invite Viktor over for a little bit this summer, but that wasn't going to be possible now.

"Yes, I can't wait," Viktor said excitedly. "There are two junior national teams in Bulgaria, and I am the youngest person ever to be selected as a Seeker."

"How did they find out how good you are?" Harry knew Nathan wasn't in the same league as Viktor, but his brother would probably be interested in knowing anyway.

"A member of the Bulgarian Department for Magical Games and Sports is a Durmstrang alumnus. My family is rather influential in Bulgaria and my uncle asked him to come and take a look at me as a personal favor. He attended my last two games, and I got a letter in December telling me that I was a finalist for the open Seeker spot on one of the junior national teams. Today, the news came that I got the spot!"

"Congratulations, Viktor. You deserve it."

"Thank you, Harry," Viktor replied with a beaming smile. "It will be a lot of hard work but I'm certain tha—"

"As interesting as all this is, Krum, I need to speak with Potter."

Harry and Viktor turned around. Standing directly behind them was a bored-looking Calypso.

Viktor narrowed his eyes at the much smaller girl. "What do you want with Harry?"

"Don't worry, Krum, I'm not going to hurt your tutor."

"Harry," Viktor said hesitantly, "I did not know you knew Ro-"

"Please," Calypso interrupted again, "call me Calypso, Viktor. Now, Potter, do you have a moment? I need your help with something."

"Alright, Calypso." Harry slowly stood up, wondering exactly what the history between Viktor and Calypso was. She was just a first year, after all. "Viktor, I'll catch up with you later, alright?"

Viktor nodded his head, but Harry noticed him mouth the words 'be careful' as he turned to leave. Confused, Harry followed Calypso to a table over by the Dark Arts section of the library. He felt several silencing and privacy charms around the table, and couldn't help but be slightly impressed.

"Good charms work."

Looking completely impassive, Calypso met Harry's eyes and, slowly, a smile graced her face. "I wish I could take the credit, but my father charmed this table so that only I or those I invite to sit here are able to use it."

"How did he do that? I could see the table, and I didn't feel any aversion to coming over and sitting down here."

Rolling her eyes, Calypso said, "Trust me, had you actually sat down and not been invited by me, you would have noticed very quickly that you didn't belong here."

Deciding that he didn't want to know exactly what curses were on the chair he was currently sitting in, Harry asked, "So what is it that you need?"

"Very well," Calypso said, her voice suddenly becoming eerily devoid of emotion. "I'm stuck in first year Charms and Transfiguration

classes with a bunch of idiots. You are already in third year Charms and Transfiguration and, from all appearances, are Professor Rosemburg's new favorite student. I'd like for you to help me skip my second year in Charms and Transfiguration."

Harry thought about it. He felt that he certainly owed Calypso for helping him, and, so far, she had not been at all hostile towards him like others in his year. Still, helping her pass her second year in two classes would take a lot of time, and he, unfortunately, didn't have a lot of that to spare. Besides the time he spent with Viktor, Harry was almost overwhelmed with trying to get caught up in Transfiguration, Charms, and Spell Creation. Still, Calypso had helped him. Biting his lip, he replied, "I don't have the time to help you with both classes, but I'll do my best to help you out in one of them. Let me know which class you eventually decide upon on, and I'll work with you."

When Harry started to stand up, Calypso immediately reached out and grabbed his arm, preventing him from leaving. Turning back to face her, Harry saw a look of undisguised anger on her face. He was about to draw his wand to force Calypso to let go of him when she abruptly released him and the anger left her face. "I apologize, Harry, but it is very important that I move ahead in both classes."

"And I don't have the time," Harry said with some bite in his voice.

"What if I can make it worth your time? I'll agree to help you with something in exchange for you helping me in both classes?"

"Oh?" Harry asked curiously. "What do you think I need?"

"From what I hear, you have been rather bored in Professor Grausam's class. I can help you jump a year in the Dark Arts."

"You're in second year Dark Arts?"

Calypso smirked victoriously. "No, I'm currently in the third year Dark Arts class, and I'm one of the best duelists. Your friend's bitch of a girlfriend has yet to even land a spell on me during our duels."

Now Harry understood what Viktor meant by 'Be careful.' Third year was when Durmstrang essentially broke from Hogwarts and Beauxbatons' Defense Against the Dark Arts curriculum and started to become more of a Dark Arts class. If Calypso had managed to test into the third year class as a first year, she must have had some extensive and rather frightening training at home from her parents.

"What do you say?" she asked.

Harry knew that his parents would probably want him to say no. Regardless of what Quirrell had told him, Harry had listened to his father when he talked about the dangerous nature of the Dark Arts, and that wasn't something he could just forget. The few dark spells Quirrell had taught him and what he had so far learned at Durmstrang weren't that dangerous, and they would be considered less than nothing if Harry actually took all seven years in the Dark Arts at Durmstrang.

Still, it seemed like Professor Grausam had taken Harry's success in his class as a personal insult. The professor was now forcing two students to fight him at once, and Harry was forced to dedicate a lot of his already sparse time to making sure his dueling spells were up to par. So far, Harry had continued to win whenever it was his turn to duel, but he knew his classmates truly hated him now, and the last few duels had been too close. He didn't even want to think about what his peers would do if they were finally able to disarm him in a duel; Merlin knows Professor Grausam probably wouldn't stop them from taking turns cursing him without his wand. Moving ahead a year would not only relieve some of the animosity Harry's peers had for him, but even if it didn't, it could still send a message that he was not someone they wanted to mess with. Jumping a year in the Dark Arts would definitely tell people he was no pushover, and all the people who still wanted to curse him would know that he had started to learn some more dangerous magic.

Feeling that he really didn't have a choice in the matter, Harry said, "Alright Calypso, you have a deal."

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Minerva and Mars

Durmstrang Library, February 28th

"You're late, Potter," Calypso said impatiently. "I've been waiting for ten minutes."

"Sorry. Viktor had a question about revealing charms, and since we might actually have a quiz tomorrow, he wanted to make sure he understood everything."

Calypso suddenly stood up and grabbed her bag. "Let's go."

"What?" Harry asked following the girl up from her table and out of the library. "Why can't we study in the library?"

"Did you really think we were going to work in the library? I just wanted to meet you there."

"Yes I thought we were going to study in the library. Where else would we study?"

"Potter, I said we were going to practice, not study, and while Lady Doktor seems to like you, do you really think she'll let us cast spells around her precious books?"

"No," Harry said slowly, "but –"

"No buts," Calypso said, stopping outside a very familiar door.

"You can't be serious," Harry said in horror. "We can't practice here."

Calypso simply ignored him and pushed the door open. When she saw that Harry wasn't following her, she turned around and glared at him. "What is your problem?"

"Calypso, Grausam already hates me! If he finds out that I'm using his classroom without his permission, he'll make me duel three students instead of two."

"What a wonderful idea, Potter, but let's make it five. A little humility could do you some good." Stepping into view, the Durmstrang Dark Arts instructor sent an irritated glance at Harry before turning to glare at Calypso. "If you damage anything, not even your father will get you out of trouble. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

While Harry thought Calypso sounded nothing but respectful, something in her tone must have bothered Grausam as Harry distinctly saw the man's hand twitch towards where he kept his wand. Grausam quickly restrained himself, and, after a final look of disgust at Harry, he left the room.

"So...we can actually use the Defense room?" Harry asked in confusion.

"Yes, my father cleared it with the Highmaster."

"Wow...umm, you don't think Grausam was serious about making me duel five people, right?"

"Hard to tell," Calypso said honestly. "He was rather annoyed, and he really doesn't like you."

"Stupid blood purists," Harry muttered angrily.

"Grausam? A purist?" Calypso laughed, causing Harry to look at her in confusion. "Potter, Grausam is the only half-blood on staff. It's one of the reasons he's not very well respected."

"I don't understand then," Harry said in frustration. "Why does he hate me?"

"Is it so uncommon for someone to just not like you, Potter?"

"But he seemed to really dislike me from the moment I arrived here," Harry argued. "It doesn't make sense."

"Potter, can you honestly not think of a reason why Grausam wouldn't like you?"

When Harry just stared at her in confusion, Calypso threw her hands into the air. "Fine. Let me explain it to you, Potter. You claim that Grausam didn't like you from the moment you got to Durmstrang, right?"

"Yes, he was really rude and standoffish when I arriv—"

"Did you ever consider," Calypso interrupted, "that the reason for that wasn't because of you, but because he had to go and collect you?"

"What?"

"Potter, would the Highmaster really send one of his more favored teachers to collect a first year, who would be arriving in the middle of January? In case you haven't noticed, warming charms only work so well outside this time of year, and Grausam would have had to walk all the way from the castle because of the anti-Apparation wards. He then had to wait for you to arrive, and then walk you back to the castle through the snow. By giving Grausam that job, Karkaroff was telling him that he was the most expendable person on the staff. Hades, the Highmaster could have sent the caretaker, but he chose Grausam. How demeaning do you think it was for Grausam to be told that the Highmaster thought less of him than everyone else on staff?"

Harry couldn't help but think back to Hogwarts. Sure enough, it was Hagrid who collected the students from the train, not a professor. While Harry thought Hagrid was certainly nice, he was by no means a very high ranking member of Hogwarts' staff. From what he knew about Durmstrang, Harry had no doubts that Calypso was probably right, and the Highmaster would send someone he had little respect for to go and bring a new student to the school.

"And since everyone knows your German was crap when you first got here," Calypso continued, "you probably had to talk to Grausam in English, which isn't a language he is rumored to be very strong in. Are you still surprised that he was rude and standoffish?"

"Alright, that explains why Grausem didn't like me when he picked me up, but what's his excuse now?" Harry challenged. "He treats me like dirt in class, and I have to duel two people at a time!"

Calypso looked at Harry like he was a complete idiot. "Potter," she said speaking the words very slowly, "you have to duel two people at a time to be challenged, and you are breezing through his class."

"So?" Harry asked. "Shouldn't he be happy that I'm doing well?"

"You shouldn't be in the first year class! You're showing up everyone else. I don't know why you aren't in your second year defense class, but you obviously should be. Grausam is probably pissed that you didn't test into a higher Dark Arts class, since you are basically wasting his time by taking the first year class."

"So, he's just trying to challenge me?" Harry asked in surprise. "He wants me to move up to a more advanced class?"

"No," Calypso said succinctly. "No, I'm pretty sure that you burned that bridge after the first few classes. He probably just resents and dislikes you now."

"What?" Harry asked in horror. "What if I—"

"Potter, I really don't want to spend the entire night discussing your problems, fascinating as they may be. We're losing time, and I'd really like to get some work done."

Harry numbly followed Calypso into the Dark Arts room, his mind a whirl of thoughts. Calypso's explanation certainly explained Grausam's attitude towards him, and Harry couldn't help but find the situation with Grausam somewhat ironic. He came to Durmstrang to be in advanced classes, and Grausam didn't like him because he was too far ahead of the rest of his class. Maybe he could talk to Grausam about moving up? No, that would be pointless, considering that he was already trying to skip his second year class now. Still, he might be able to ask Grausam...

"Potter!" Calypso snapped, jarring Harry from his thoughts. "Are we going to work or not?"

"Right, sorry. What do you want to do first, Charms or Transfiguration?"

"Charms. I'm almost done with the first year spell list."

"Alright, the important thing to remember is that it's not just the wand movement and incantation, but also your imagination and emotional intent behind the spell. That means if I ask you charm—"

"Potter, I'm not Krum, you don't need to explain basic magical theory to me." Calypso went over to her bag, took out a piece of parchment, and handed it to Harry. "Just pick out some of the spells on this list and help me learn them. I can take care of the magical theory on my own time."

"Alright," Harry said, somewhat pleased that he wouldn't have to walk Calypso through the basic theory. However, as he read over the list of first year spells, Harry grew more and more confused. Most of the spells were ridiculously simple: turn an object a different color, levitate an object, and make an object fly. Harry was actually surprised at how easy the last few spells on the list were. "This is...really simple stuff. Is this the entire list?"

"Yes."

"That doesn't make any sense. My brother just asked me a question in his latest letter about inanimate animation charms, but that is the most advanced spell on this entire list. I thought Durmstrang was supposed to be...more advanced? Why does the Hogwarts curriculum move faster?"

"It's actually really obvious when you think about, Potter," Calypso replied.

Harry just looked at her expectantly. When it didn't appear that Calypso was going to elaborate and was more interested in trying to get multiple objects to levitate at once, he said, "Well, why is

Hogwarts further ahead than Durmstrang? My Charms class covers a lot of material, but it looks like your class only learns a new spell once every two weeks."

"Potter, how many students do you have in your Charms class?"

"I don't know, 30 or so."

"I have 40 people in my class, Potter. That means at some point between the end of first year and the start of third year, 10 students in each Charms class didn't pass. First year classes tend to be very basic and slow, second year is more intense, third year more than second year, and so on and so forth. The reason your class can move at a faster pace and learn new spells more often is that the professors have already removed the stupider students after first and second year."

"Okay, I understand what you're saying, but why doesn't Durmstrang just set the same level requirement as Hogwarts? That way they could cut more people?"

"Because Durmstrang isn't Hogwarts, Potter." Calypso said in exasperation. "Hogwarts has its standards, and we have ours. If you don't like how things are run at Durmstrang, then go back to Hogwarts."

"That's not what I meant, I was just curious," Harry said defensively.

"And I don't really care. Can we please just get back to practicing? It is the reason why we are here."

"Alright. Do you have a pineapple?"

"No, but I brought some apples." Calypso went back over to her bag and took out the fruit. "Will this work?"

"It's fine," Harry replied. "Put one on the table and make it dance."

Calypso frowned. "That's not on the spell list."

"No, but my brother said that is something the Charms professor at Hogwarts mentioned might be on their exam. You can learn this simple stuff on your own time. If you have problems, ask me, but if you really want to skip your second year of Charms, you're going to have to work hard to get ahead. Since my brother is just now starting to learn this, and it's not on your first year list, that means it'll probably be one of the first few spells you have to learn in second year."

"Do you know the incantation and wand movements?"

Harry quickly took out his wand and demonstrated the spell a few times for Calypso. He then watched her struggle to perform the spell, interjecting a few pointers when she appeared to be really stuck. After nearly half an hour, in which Calypso both accidentally and intentionally melted her apple, she finally got the fruit to waddle across the table.

"Finally," she said, just as the apple stopped moving. Calypso tried to get the apple to move again, but when it remained still, she angrily prodded it with her wand, causing it to explode. "Stupid fruit!"

"I-I think that's enough of Charms for tonight." Harry couldn't keep the amusement out of his voice, and Calypso turned to glare at him.

"It's not funny, Potter."

Harry grinned. "I certainly think it is."

"Then let's see how funny you think it is after we duel." Calypso drew her wand and walked onto the dueling platform. "Come on, Potter."

"I thought we'd work on Transfigurati—"

"Nope. Fair is fair, Potter. You helped me with Charms, so now I should help you with the Dark Arts before we start Transfiguration." A surprised look suddenly appeared on Calypso's face. "That is, unless you're scared to duel me. I'm sure Krum and his girlfriend have told you just how talented I am."

Indeed, Viktor had mentioned that Calypso was supposedly some kind of dueling prodigy. 'Annoyingly fucking intuitive' was the phrase Kira had used to describe Calypso's ability to Viktor, who had then forwarded the message to Harry. Apparently, while Calypso didn't use shields, she was incredible at avoiding harmful spells, and her curses packed a punch. Still, Harry couldn't help but be somewhat confident. He had spent most of his first year at Hogwarts dueling with an adult, and Calypso, no matter how talented, just couldn't be better than Professor Quirrell.

Taking his place opposite her on the dueling platform, Harry said, "I'm not scared of you, Calypso."

As was standard at the beginning of the duels, Harry and Calypso locked eyes and gave each other a small bow. They then both fell into their dueling stances. Harry turned his body sidewise towards Calypso, to limit the area she could hit, and held his wand loosely in his front hand, ready to cast a quick shield charm. Looking at Calypso, Harry couldn't help but notice how different their styles really were.

While he was prepared to dodge, defend, and counter quickly, a lesson he learned through trial and error with Quirrell, Calypso's style screamed attack. She stood with her wand arm cocked back behind her, poised to make the quick forward thrusting motion necessary for most curses. As a result of her aggressive stance, her body was exposed to an opening curse, and Harry strongly considered sending the first spell to take advantage of her stance.

"Ready?" she asked.

"Yes, on three?"

"Agreed. One..."

"Two..."

"Three."

Flicking his wand up, Harry sent a stunner directly at Calypso's body, but she was already moving to her left and easily avoided it.

Harry immediately found himself dodging a return stunner from Calypso, and he dropped to one knee, allowing it to sail easily over his head. With a swish of his wand, Harry snapped out, "Flagrate," sending a thin streak of fire at Calypso's legs.

Calypso leapt backwards, but not before the flame managed to hit her left ankle, eliciting a shriek from her. Snapping her head up, she shot Harry a poisonous glare before viciously slashing her wand across her body and whispering an incantation. A burst of twisting yellow light erupted from her wand and Harry immediately screamed, "Protego," to protect himself from the unfamiliar curse.

While his shield held, Harry was knocked backwards several feet, and he knew his shield wouldn't stand up against another spell. Canceling the shield charm, Harry tried to return fire against Calypso, but he found himself facing a barrage of spells. He twisted out of the way of a knee-inverter hex, and he narrowly avoided a nasty spell known as the Jelly-Brain curse. Spotting an opening, Harry stepped forward and sent a Leg-Locker and full body-bind spell at Calypso.

Somehow, Calypso seemed to anticipate the attack and she quickly spun to the left, causing the spells to just narrowly miss her shoulder. Unfortunately for Harry, she hadn't been idle while spinning to avoid his spells. When Calypso completed her rotation back towards him, she had already finished the wand movement for her next spell. With a knowing grin on her face, Calypso hissed, "Bombarda."

Harry tried to cast a shield, but in his attempt to press his advantage against Calypso, he had moved too close to her. Her curse quickly crossed the distance between them, sent Harry flying across the dueling platform, and into the back wall, knocking the wind from his lungs. Gasping for air, Harry struggled to his knees. Lifting his head, he was able to look up just in time to see a red light smash directly into his face.

"Ennervate."

"Owww," Harry groaned rubbing the back of his head. "What was that last spell? There is no way you can do a banishment charm yet."

"The spell I used is called the Bombardment Hex. From what I know about the banishment charm, the caster has some semblance of control over where the object you banish goes. This spells just sends things in the opposite direction of the duelist who cast it at a high rate of speed. That was a surprisingly good duel, Potter. You even got me with that fire spell." Calypso knelt down and rubbed her ankle where a blistering red welt had appeared.

"That looks like it really hurts. Are you okay?" Harry asked in concern.

"I've got some burn salve in my room, so don't worry about it. How are you? You hit that wall pretty hard."

"Yeah, thankfully my head didn't hit the wall, just my back. I'll be alright, but I don't think we should duel anymore unless we want to end up in the hospital wing with Lady Shluga."

"Agreed. I don't suppose you've asked Grausam for the second year spell list so you can prepare to test out of the class?"

"Uh, no, I haven't," Harry said hesitantly.

"You should do that pretty soon. I don't know what spells they learned during second year, so I can't really help you until I see what you need to know."

"Wait," Harry said suddenly. "There isn't a dueling component to the end of the year exams?"

"Of course not. You can't have people in the hospital wing and missing their scheduled time to present their final project."

"So...what was the point of dueling then?"

Calypso grinned. "I just wanted to see how good you were, and I'm impressed, Potter. Typically when I start sending spells at people they just hide behind a shield, but you actually dropped your shield to counter me."

"Well it's not like I had a choice." Harry replied hotly.

"What do you mean?"

"The shield never would have stopped another spell, and those spells you were sending would have hit me. I had to do something, and I didn't think being cursed senseless was a good option."

"That...makes sense." Calypso sent a curious look at Harry before letting a small smile appear on her face. "We should duel again. It was a fun challenge."

"Maybe," Harry said evasively. "If we can't work on my Dark Arts stuff until I get the second year spell list, do you want to work on Transfiguration?"

"Well, we could work on your first year list if you'd like." When Calypso saw Harry roll his eyes slightly, she hid a smirk. Apparently, Harry Potter thought he could already do most the first year Dark Arts spells. That raised some interesting questions. "If you don't want to though, we can move on to Transfiguration. I'm a little ahead in the course, and I think I can already do almost all of the first year spells, but I am having a problem turning a mouse into a snuffbox, so..."

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The Threat

Girls' Wing, Durmstrang, March 1st

The sharp knocking at her door caused Calypso to put aside her book and draw her wand. Had Potter figured it out already? If it had been anyone else, she would have said no, but Potter was clearly not your average Durmstrang student.

Making sure her wand was hidden yet accessible, Calypso opened her door. She narrowed her eyes at her surprise visitor.

"What do you want," she demanded.

"We need to talk. Now."

Calypso sneered and made to close the door. However, before the door was halfway shut, she was pushed backwards, and Viktor Krum angrily strode into her room. Calypso drew her wand, but Krum hadn't stopped moving once he had managed to get inside. Quickly crossing the distance between them, Viktor dodged Calypso's hex, and, using his superior strength, physically disarmed her of her wand.

"Get out of my room, Krum!" Calypso snarled as the large Bulgarian flicked her wand at the door, causing it to slam shut.

"No, I don't think I will." Placing Calypso's wand into his robes, Viktor stepped forward and roughly grabbed Calypso's arm, stopping her from retreating away from him. "Why are you showing an interest in Harry Potter?"

"Let go of me, Krum!" Calypso kicked out with her left leg, hitting the Bulgarian squarely between his legs. Krum grimaced at the sharp pain.

"What," he repeated angrily, "are you planning to do to Harry Potter?"

"Afraid I'm going to hurt your tutor, Krum?"

"I'm afraid," Viktor said as he applied pressure to Calypso's wrists, causing her wince slightly, "that you will hurt my friend. Imagine my surprise this morning when Harry told me that the two of you had been practicing magic alone in Grausam's classroom last night." Raising his voice, Viktor continued, "As if that wasn't enough, imagine, if you can, my reaction to finding out that the two of you had a friendly duel."

"It's not like I used Dark Magic! I want his help, you ignoran—"

"Shut up! I do not care about what spells you used, and I do not give a hippogriff's shit what you claim your motivations are. You will never duel Harry Potter again unless I am there to watch and act as his second. You are very fortunate that Harry appears to be fine and

actually enjoyed his time with you last night. I assume, of course, that he doesn't know who you are, does he?"

Calypso said nothing, but her silence was all the confirmation Viktor needed. "Very well. Since Harry seems...happy to have made an acquaintance his own age, I will not interfere with your little study group. That said, if you so much look like you're going to send a Jelly-Legs jinx at him, I will return the favor one hundredfold upon you. Is that understood?"

"If you try to do anything to me, Krum, my father—"

"Will do nothing," Viktor snapped. "My family is not without influence, and, unlike yours, we aren't tainted with the stain of being associated with dark lords."

"Like your parents would lift a finger to help you! Everyone knows you're a disgrace, always flying around on your broomstick, ignoring actual magic in favor of that stupid game."

Viktor's face contorted in rage. Withdrawing Calypso's wand from his robes, Viktor shoved it under her neck, the tip glowing a soft pink hue. "If you ever mention my family again, I will make you regret it."

After a moment of tense silence, Viktor threw Calypso's wand into the furthest corner of the room. "Remember my words. I do not know why you are interested in Harry, but if anything happens to him..." Without another word, he shoved Calypso onto a nearby couch, and, with a final look of disgust on his face, left her room.

Getting up from the couch, Calypso walked to the corner of the room and collected her wand. She softly rubbed her bruised wrist and hatefully glared at the spot where Viktor Krum had just been standing.

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Main Hall, Durmstrang, March 10th

Sitting at the breakfast table, Harry ate some porridge while Viktor and Kira discussed something from her Dark Arts class. Viktor had

come to the conclusion that Kira and Harry needed to spend more time together in order to become friends. Personally, Harry thought that there was as much a chance of that happening as Wizards and Muggles reconciling their differences and dropping that Statue of Secrecy.

The fluttering of wings announced that the mail had arrived, and Harry saw a large, impressive-looking horned owl land in front of Viktor, who removed the scroll from the creature's leg. Harry was about to ask who the letter was from when an owl landed next to him.

Harry,

Alright, this might sound a little crazy, but believe me, everything is completely true. Earlier this year, Hermione, Ron, and I were out of bounds after curfew when we ended up in the forbidden third floor Charms corridor. You know, the one that Professor Dumbledore warned us about at the welcoming feast.

Well, it turns out the corridor is forbidden because there is a gigantic three-headed dog in that room. Yeah, that's right. A massive, drooling, very mean, three-headed dog is just standing on a trap door in the room.

Harry had to put down the letter. His brother was without a doubt the dumbest person he had ever met. No, Harry corrected himself, that wasn't true. Nathan was never stupid like that before he started Hogwarts, and he knew Granger was not the type to break a serious rule. That left one person. Weasley. Harry made a mental note to curse the boy when he undoubtedly showed up at their house over the summer.

It turns out that the dog is Hagrid's, and he lent him to Professor Dumbledore to guard something. Hagrid wouldn't tell us what the dog was guarding, but he did say it was between the Headmaster and a person by the name of Nicholas Flamel. Ron, Hermione, and I couldn't figure out who Flamel was until your letter. Thanks, by the way.

Nicholas Flamel is not just Dumbledore's partner for the twelve uses of dragon's blood, but he's also the only known maker of the Philosopher's Stone, the elixir of life! That's what we think Fluffy (that's the three-headed dog's name) is guarding. Flamel's Philosopher's Stone is at Hogwarts, and I think Snape is trying to steal it!

Now before you tell me that I'm wrong, listen to what Ron, Hermione, and I found out. Do you remember my first Quidditch match when I lost control of my broom? Well, I didn't lose control, it was being jinxed by Snape! Hermione set him on fire with a blue ball flame she had brought with her to keep warm during the match, and once she had done that, I regained control of my broom. Also, around November, I went to the staff lounge to get a book back that Snape had confiscated from me, and I saw he had a bloody leg and was complaining about Fluffy attacking him. Hermione, Ron, and I think he might have let that troll into the school on Halloween as a diversion so he could get past Fluffy!

We need help to prove to the Headmaster or Professor McGonagall that Snape is trying to steal the stone. Can you think of anything that might help us?

Stay warm,

Nathan

"Of all the stupid, ludicrous, idiotic things," Harry swore angrily, causing Krum and Kira to look up in surprise.

"What's wrong?" Viktor asked.

"My brother is a moron."

Viktor snorted in amusement while Kira did her best to seemingly ignore Harry's existence.

"I'll see you in Charms, Viktor." Harry grabbed his bag and stood up.

"Where are you going?"

"To send a letter to my brother before he does something completely mental."

ooo0000ooo

What's in a Name

Dark Arts Classroom, March 17th

"What is the difference between a regular magical creature and a Dark creature?"

"While a regular magical creature can be dangerous, they are dangerous because of their animal nature. For example a manticore or acromantula will kill a wizard and eat him to survive, but a Dark creature will attack even if it isn't hungry. Dark creatures attack for the sake of hurting someone, not simply to eat."

"Describe a Dark creature you might encounter at your time at Durmstrang."

"A boggart is the most likely. They've been found here before, and they traditionally like dark, confined spaces. "

"Alright, last question. What is the best way to identify a Pogrebin?"

"Well, sudden feelings of hopelessness and depression when you were previously feeling fine is an indicator. Also, if you ever notice a rock that isn't covered by snow in winter, it is most likely a Pogrebin. Their natural body heat melts snow before it can build up on them, making it obvious that they are not really rocks."

Calypso put down the first and second year Dark Arts examination questions. "This is the last time I'm going to ask you any of these questions. Why do they even bother testing us on the theory if the questions are going to be this easy? "

"I don't know. Maybe they make the theory exam easy so that students can focus more on the practical stuff."

"Are you good with the Dark Arts? I've been meaning to ask you a question about animation charms."

"I'm fine," Harry replied. "What's your question?"

"How do I get a single animation charm to have multiple effects? Professor Kosarev used an animation charm today, and he made a banana not only start to dance, but sing also. Is it a more advanced spell, or..."

Harry smiled as he listened to Calypso list off her theories on why a single charm could have multiple effects. Working with Calypso was a lot different than working with Viktor. When Viktor didn't know or understand something, Harry knew that he'd have to help him. Fortunately, Harry found that by re-teaching and explaining things to Viktor, it helped him better master the material. Working with Calypso was a refreshing change of pace. Instead of needing to give Calypso the answers, Harry found that she liked to talk out the problem and to try to solve it herself first. Whenever she would get stuck or start going in the wrong direction, he would point out something she didn't think of, but, generally, Calypso would reach the conclusion by herself without too much of his help.

"...perhaps he sent a second spell that I didn't notice. He could have—"

"Calypso, it's not an advanced spell or anything. When you got your apple to dance for the first time, was the animation as good as it is now?"

"No," she said slowly, "it wasn't very good at all."

"So, if your animation charm got better the more you practiced it, what does that tell you?"

"That eventually the spell could be used for more complicated animations?"

Harry grinned. "Got it in one. The spell is the same, but Professor Kosarev has just practiced it more and has better control over what he wanted to happen. Do you want to try a multiple animation or something?"

"I was hoping to use one on my final project, but it might be too advanced. I'll have to come up with something else."

"At least you have an idea what you're going to do," Harry muttered.

"You don't?" Calypso asked, surprised. "Have you started thinking about it at all? It does have to be good enough to get you into third year Dark Arts, and from what the other students say about Grausam, he likes grandiose and impressive projects, not just advanced spells."

"I've thought about it a little, but I just can't think of anything impressive enough. Viktor's been asking me what I plan to do for Transfiguration and Charms, and I haven't told him because I don't know."

"Have you considered combining the projects for a few classes so you don't have to work as much?"

"We can do that?"

"You just need to alert the instructors beforehand so they can make sure that their schedules coordinate appropriately," Calypso explained. "I had thought about doing a Charms and Dark Arts project, but that's not likely to happen if I can't do a multiple animation."

"What were you planning on doing?"

"The Charms aspect was going to involve household charms and animation, while the Dark Arts would have been demonstrating the use of household charms in a duel."

"Sounds...complicated," Harry said as he tried to think how one could use household charms and the Dark Arts. Whatever Calypso had planned, he probably didn't want to know too much about it. "Well, you could still probably use some household charms in your project if

you want. Those are generally taught at the start of third year, and I could let you borrow my book to read about them." Harry went to his bag and quickly handed Calypso his Charms book.

"Thanks," she said, placing the book into her own bag. "Do you want to work on anything else?"

"I think that's enough for today," Harry said. "I'm supposed to meet Viktor for lunch anyway."

"I'll see you in Spell Creation tomorrow then," Calypso said as she grabbed her bag and left the room.

Harry quickly gathered his books and put the few desks they'd moved back into place. While Calypso didn't care about leaving Grausam's room a disorganized mess, Harry had no desire to further antagonize his Dark Arts professor. Once everything was back to normal, he walked out of the room and placed a locking charm on the door.

Entering the Main Hall, Harry muttered a curse under his breath when he saw that Kira was sitting next to Viktor. Harry contemplated turning around and getting food later, but just as he was about to leave, Viktor looked up and waved at him. Walking over to the table, Harry sat down across from Viktor and Kira.

"Hey Viktor," Harry said, "How was your practice this morning?"

"It was alright. Nicolai took a Bludger to his hand, and he called practice off early so that he could go to the hospital wing."

"And you actually left early?" Harry asked.

"Well, no," Viktor admitted. "I stayed for an hour or so to practice drills."

"Kosarev should just name you the captain," Kira said haughtily. "You're the most dedicated and talented person on the team."

"I'm also one of the youngest players, and it is rare for Seekers to be named the captain anyway."

"That shouldn't matter," Harry said, somewhat surprised to be agreeing with Kira. From the look on her face, his support was not particularly wanted.

"No one is named a captain before their fifth year. Ever. It's tradition. I will probably be named captain next year when Nicholai graduates."

"I still say that you deserve it," Kira said stubbornly. "You design most of the plays, you book the field, and you practice longer than anyone else. By Zeus, Viktor, you already do most the things that Nicolai is supposed to be doing."

Viktor gritted his teeth in frustration. He had been doing most of the captain's duties for the last two years, but Kosarev still hadn't given him the title. More than once Viktor had seriously considered injuring Nicolai during practice, but he knew if he did that, his team mates would never accept him as the new captain. Even with all that Viktor did for the team, Nicolai was far more popular. Wanting to think about something else, Viktor asked, "What time do you want to practice Charms tonight, Harry?"

Harry's eyes widened. "Oh, I'm sorry, Viktor, I forgot that we were supposed to practice tonight. Calypso and I were practicing this morning, and I lent her my Charms book. I'll have to go and get my book back. I suppose I can duplicate the pages she wanted to look at on household charms."

"Wait, wait just a minute. You," Kira pointed her finger directly at Harry, "are friends with—"

"No," Viktor interrupted, "they just practice spells together. Right, Harry?"

Harry looked between Viktor and Kira in confusion. "I don't know. I mean, I enjoy spending time with Calypso. She's actually really smart and very talented —"

"That bitch," Kira snapped, "is not talented. Old man Rosier should have smothered her at birth if you ask me."

Harry felt his heart skip a beat. Rosier? He knew that name. The entire family was said to have been as dark as the Lestranges, and Death Eaters to boot, but the family line was supposed to have ended. "Calypso's last name is Rosier?" he asked weakly.

"You're friends with her, and you don't even know her last name? What's wrong with you, Pott—" Kira's eyes suddenly widened, and a moment later she started to laugh uproariously. "You didn't know! You didn't know that her father was one of the last Dark Lord's followers!"

Turning to Viktor, Harry asked, "Did you know that Calypso was a Rosier?"

Viktor met his friend's eyes and stoically replied, "Yes."

"Why didn't you tell me?" Harry demanded.

"You seemed happy, and you just admitted that you think of her as a friend," Viktor said tiredly. "I...dislike the Rosier family for my own reasons, and, as long as she didn't try to harm you, I saw no reason to ruin the closest thing you had to a friend near your age."

"I-I need to go," Harry said, quickly standing up and leaving the Main Hall.

As he walked down the hallway and up the main staircase, Harry thought back to what he knew about the Rosier family. He had overheard Sirius talking about how he and his cousin Andromeda despised Andromeda's mother, Druella Black, nee Rosier. Sirius had called her a 'twisted old hag', and Andromeda apparently blamed her mother for turning her sisters against her. There was also another Rosier that Harry knew his mother absolutely hated. The only time Harry had ever heard his mother swear was when Sirius mentioned an Evan Rosier. That Rosier had apparently hurt one of his mother's friends back at Hogwarts, but she refused to talk about it beyond that.

Reaching the top of the staircase, Harry immediately made a right heading down the girls' corridor. As he walked passed all the doors,

Harry realized just how many fewer girls were at Durmstrang than boys. By the time it would have taken him to get to his own room on the boys side, he had reached the Rs. Racsner, Raymond, Reiginald, and Rheinstein, soon gave way to Rippling, Rolland, and then Rosier.

Harry knocked on the door and waited.

After a few moments, the door opened and Calypso stood there looking surprised to see him. "Potter. What do you need?"

"We need to talk," Harry said brushing passed Calypso and walking into her room. Once inside, Harry came to a very abrupt stop.

The room was massive! His entire room could have fit into the space of Calypso's living room. A couch was pushed against a far wall, and a much more elegant desk was sitting in a corner.

Turning around, Harry asked, "Are all the girls' rooms this size?"

Calypso laughed. "No, Potter, my father felt that while living like a peasant would be alright for some, it was not acceptable for a Rosier to live as such."

"He must have used a space expanding charm on the entire room." Harry began to walk around the room, and he wondered if more people altered their room like this. "He probably transfigured the desk, maybe even conjured the couch. What's through that door?" he asked, gesturing to a door that seemingly shouldn't have been there.

"Do you really think that I sleep on a couch? That's my room with an attached loo."

"That...would be beyond anything I could do. I'd need to transfigure the walls or manipulate the space enhancement charm. Not to mention the attached loo. You'd need to figure out how to get the water to work, and I don't have the first idea where to begin something like that," Harry thought out loud. "I think I could do everything else. Some of the transfiguration and charms I'd have to practice, but I'm sure I could figure it out before the end of the term."

"Figured out what you're going to do for your final project?" Calypso asked knowingly.

Harry just turned and nodded his head. "What do you think? Would that be good enough?"

"To get an 'M?'" Calypso asked. "I don't know, but it'll definitely get you a 'J' which would be good enough for you to pass."

"M? J?" Harry asked looking confused. "What are you talking about?"

Calypso wasn't able to keep the surprise of her face. "Hasn't anyone explained the final grade scoring system here to you yet?"

Harry just shook his head, causing Calypso to scowl slightly.

"While we use the standard owl system for tests and such, the final grades are calculated differently," Calypso explained patiently. "There are three grades you can receive at the end of year which are considered passing. Although, technically, only two of them allow you move up a year level. The best grade you can get on your final project is an 'M.' It stands for Master, and it's awarded to the best student in each class in every year. The next passing grade is 'J' for Journeyman. If you don't get an 'M' and you want to move on to the next level in a course, you need to get a J. After a J is an 'A,' or Apprentice. This grade is passing, but you have to retake the course next year. Basically, it's a do-over."

"Next are the three failing grades. 'B' stands for 'Blood-traitor'-" Harry scowled darkly, but Calypso simply ignored him- "-and results in you failing the course. You can petition the teacher to let you back into the class the next year, but unless the teacher really likes you, you probably won't be allowed. I hear your friend Krum is rather familiar with this grade. Worse than a 'B' is an 'S' for Squib. If you get an 'S' you fail the course and can't ever take a course in that subject ever again. That means if you get an 'S' in second year Transfiguration, you can never take a Transfiguration class at Durmstrang ever again. You are also banned from checking out books in the library on that subject—"

"What!" Harry exclaimed in horror. "So if you fail, you can't even study the information any longer?"

"Of course," Calypso said, looking at Harry as though he were stupid. "Why should the school let someone borrow a book when they've already proven their uselessness in the subject? By letting the moron check out that book, you are stopping someone competent from reading it."

As strange as it seemed, Harry couldn't help but somewhat agree. If you couldn't do the work, why should you stop someone else from learning? "I-well, I suppose that makes sense in a way."

"Yes, I'm sure the Highmaster will be glad you approve, Potter. Now, if you get four or more 'S's in your time at Durmstrang, you are expelled. That's why a lot of people who get As or Bs just stop taking some courses-it's better to just stop than to potentially get an S. Finally, the worst grade you can get is a lowercase 'm' which stands for Muggle. This grade is given out to the worst student in each class for each year. The students who are awarded the uppercase and lowercase 'M's for each class are read off during the welcoming feast at the start of each year, so it's a great deal of pride or embarrassment to receive one."

Harry shook his head. "Hogwarts is a lot different."

"I know. My family was living in Britain during the 1970s and so father sent my brother to Hogwarts. I think it's stupid to let people who routinely fail a class to continue taking it after their fifth year."

The mention of her father and brother brought Harry back to his reason for the visit. "Why didn't you tell me you were a Rosier?"

Calypso's face quickly became devoid of any emotion. "What would you have done if I had introduced myself as Calypso Rosier and then proceeded to give you a Dark Arts book?"

"I don't know," Harry admitted.

"I'll tell you what you would have done, Potter. You would have ignored my advice, or asked Krum what he knew about me. The broomloom would have confirmed how terrible my family is, or told you that I'm dangerous because I'm better than his girlfriend at the Dark Arts. I need your help to get out of first year Charms and Transfiguration, so, yes, I avoided telling you my last name. I'm not sorry that I kept it from you."

Harry sighed. "You don't know that's what I would have done."

"Of course it is," Calypso said dismissively. "My family is one of the most notorious practitioners of the Dark Arts in Europe. You would have avoided me at all costs. The only reason you're even here now is because you've seen I'm not an evil, twisted, dark witch, and you're curious about my family."

"I also told Viktor that you were my friend," Harry snapped, slightly unnerved by how well Calypso could read his intentions.

"Well, you know who I am now, Potter. Do you still want to be my friend? I can just imagine what your parents would say."

"They'd..." Harry stopped. His parents probably wouldn't understand. Changing the subject, Harry asked, "I thought the Rosier family line had died out. My uncle Sirius said that Evan Rosier was the last."

"That was a bit of misinformation. My father was injured very badly in 1980, and he spent the rest of the war recovering in France. My mother died giving birth to me in 1979 and when my brother Evan died, I was hidden by my first cousin. Very few people knew my mother was pregnant, and those that did know were family or...associates of my father. They kept me safe and stopped anyone from knowing about me until my father was able to get me out of Britain."

"So your brother is Evan Rosier?" Harry asked.

Calypso nodded.

If Calypso's brother went to Hogwarts with his parents in the seventies, that would make her father... "Wow," Harry said, "your father must be really old."

"If you ever meet my father, I wouldn't call him old." Calypso smiled. "But yes, I guess you could say that I was a bit of a surprise."

"So, um..."

"Just ask Harry," Calypso prodded. "I know you want to know."

"Your father was a Death Eater," Harry said bluntly. "How do I know that you...well, how do I know that –"

"How do you know that I'm not trying to use you somehow?"

"Well, yeah."

Calypso sighed. "You know, Harry, we're a lot alike. Most of the school judged you the second you arrived here based on your name. It was the same for me, except while people instantly disliked you for being a talented half-blood, it took them about a week to hate me."

"What do you mean?"

"Come on Potter, surely you've heard a few things about me. I was put into a third year Dark Arts class, which only a handful of people have ever managed. My room is huge for a first year, and my father's relationship with the Highmaster is well known. Everyone thought that I was getting special privileges because of who I was."

"But you're good at the Dark Arts. People would have realized that you weren't getting special treatment for that."

"Oh, they did realize," Calypso said, a dark look crossing her face. "They realized it when I started to show how talented a duelist I am. But do you really think that made me any friends? I heard a rumor that you got jumped for doing well in your third year classes. Is that true?" Without waiting for Harry to answer, Calypso continued, "I wouldn't be surprised at all if it is true. Now, if people got upset at you

for just doing better academically, how do you think that a third year would take it if they were routinely embarrassed in a duel by a first year?"

Harry winced slightly. "Not well."

"No," Calypso said dryly, "that's an understatement. My classmates started throwing darker spells at me, and I had to adapt. Harry, do you know why I need to get into third year Charms and Transfiguration?"

"Because your classmates are idiots," Harry replied.

"No that's why I want to skip second year Charms and Transfiguration. I need to move ahead because if I don't, it won't matter what curses I know. If I can't cast a shield charm, I'll eventually grow tired from dodging and get cursed. If I can't de-animate advanced charms or cancel advanced transfigurations, I could get really hurt. I'm not dueling first years, Potter. I've cursed older students with dark magic. If you think the students in your Dark Arts class want to hurt you, how do you think my classmates feel about me?"

"This still doesn't explain why I should trust you," Harry said with just a touch of sympathy. "You're a Rosier. You could be—"

"And you're a Potter!" Calypso shouted. "I'm not my father, just like you're not your father or brother. Merlin, you're at Durmstrang! I don't think a Potter has ever come to this school, so obviously people don't have to be their families."

"Have you told your father about me?" Harry asked, looking Calypso straight in the eyes.

Calypso met his gaze unflinchingly. "No. He doesn't even know that I've talked to you. Like I said, Potter, I really need your help."

After a moment, Harry broke eye contact. "Alright, I believe you."

Extending her hand, Calypso said, "Calypso Rosier. Nice to meet you."

"Harry Potter. Likewise."

"So, are we good?"

"Yeah, I think we are...provided you ask your father what spells he used to expand your room."

Calypso smiled. "Deal. I'll see you tomorrow, Harry."

"Have you had lunch?" Harry asked. "I sort of walked out on Viktor and Kira after I found out who you are, and I haven't eaten."

"Are you sure that you want to be seen eating with me?" Calypso asked with a grin. "People will talk if they see us sitting together."

"It's not like either of our classmates will like us any less."

"True."

Walking back downstairs with Calypso, Harry couldn't help but think that perhaps he had just made another friend. Biting his lip, Harry wondered if being friends with Calypso would be a good thing or a bad thing. Either way, he wouldn't be mentioning in his letters home that he had started to enjoy spending his free time studying the Dark Arts with Calypso Rosier. He doubted very much that anything good would ever come from that.

A/N: Okay, I admit it took a bit longer than 2-4 weeks. What can I say, real life happens. The next chapter will conclude Harry's first year at Durmstrang. Also, while a number of you seemed intrigued by the Durmstrang ballet idea, I must inform you that I will not be writing anything of the sort...ever.

So... thoughts? Critiques? Comments?

Chapter 6

Durmstrang Spring Part 3

The Myth of Perfection

Spell Creation Classroom, March 25th

Gritting his teeth in frustration, Harry tried a clockwise swirl instead of a counter-clockwise twist. "Lumos."

Nothing.

"Lumos," he tried again.

Still nothing.

"LUMOS!"

"So there is something that Harry Potter isn't great at? I'll alert the paper."

Harry fought the urge to send a hex at Calypso. Professor Cherny had no tolerance for spellwork that didn't relate to his class, and Calypso wouldn't ignore being hexed, especially in front of other first years. "What am I doing wrong? I didn't change the fundamentals of the spell, it should be working."

With a sigh, Calypso leaned over to look at Harry's notes. After a moment, she made a tutting sound and looked up at him. "You made far too many assumptions. Regardless of how little you changed the spell, you still changed it. If you're going to stick with this project, you're going to need to completely rework the mechanics from scratch. You're fortunate it's a simple spell, or else I'd say there was no chance that you would be able to make the necessary changes in time."

"This was supposed to be my easy final project," Harry moaned. "A little tweak to an existing spell, just to show I understood the concepts."

Calypso smiled. "Oh, if you manage this, you'll certainly demonstrate that you understand the concepts. You will have essentially made a new spell, not just 'tweaked' an existing one. So, are you going to stick with it or try to come up with something new?"

"Like what?" Harry asked bitterly. "This at least makes a slight bit of sense to me. Can I look at your notes again?"

"Still trying to figure out my project? Really, Potter, it's not that complex."

Muttering an insult under his breath, Harry accepted Calypso's notes and tried again to figure out what she was trying to do, and, more importantly, if anything she did could be used to help his own increasingly more difficult final project. After a solid minute of reading through her notes, Harry pushed the parchment away with a look of disgust on his face.

If there was one thing Harry Potter hated, it was being ignorant about magic. It was therefore very difficult for him to accept that he still couldn't figure out what Calypso's final project was supposed to be. That wasn't to say that her project was necessarily that complex, it was just written in proper spell creation format. Instead of actually explaining what the spell did, proper format required that the mechanics of the spell be explained in nauseating detail. So, instead of just saying that the spell was a curse and giving the wand movement, Harry was struggling to analyze what effect a sixty degree upward vertical twist followed by a downward slash across the body would have..

According to his textbook, slashing movements were designed primarily for curses, but he didn't understand what effect the vertical twist would have, or why sixty degrees was required. At first he thought that it was just a generic number, but then he read the chapter on numerology and angles in his book. Apparently, when designing a spell, the specific degree could drastically affect the spell's final outcome. Unfortunately, the book didn't take the time to specifically explain the effect every different degree would have on

each combination of wand movements, mostly because there were literally countless combinations and effects.

"I could just tell you," Calypso offered nonchalantly.

Harry shook his head. "I'll figure it out...eventually."

There was a slight pause before Calypso looked up at her friend and laughed softly. The sound of her laughter quickly gathered the attention of a few nearby students, who still appeared amazed that Harry Potter and Calypso Rosier were friends. With a slight grin, Calypso turned her attention back onto her work. She had a slight smile on her face for the rest of class as she watched Harry intently scrutinize her notes, to no avail.

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Harry's Room, Durmstrang, April 6th

Dear Harry,

I know you told me to stay out of it, but Snape is threatening Professor Quirrell! After my last Quidditch game (we won by the way, Dad was really impressed at how fast I caught the Snitch.), I saw a cloaked figure run out to the Forbidden Forest. I followed him from the air on my broom, and I saw Snape and Quirrell talking. Snape said something about needing to know how to get past Quirrell's 'Hocus pocus.' Hermione said that's a Muggle term for magic, weird that Mum never mentioned that before.

Hermione figures that it's not just Fluffy guarding the stone. We think that all the teachers have put some sort of enchantment or something to protect it, and Snape is trying to figure out what they are. I think Quirrell's is the only one he doesn't know yet!

You know how Quirrell is, Harry, he's practically scared of his own shadow! The stone will probably be gone by the time you get this letter if we don't do something about it! Do you have any idea about what protections might be guarding the stone? What about a way we

could delay Snape? I've got Hermione brainstorming, but we can't let Snape get too suspicious that we know what he's doing.

Is it warming up yet in Siberia? Hogwarts is finally starting to get nice again.

Nathan

Harry felt the need for a good pain relief potion. He thought his brother had moved on from the bizarre belief that Snape wanted to steal the Philosopher's Stone. He had to stop this right now.

Nathan,

Snape is not trying to steal the Philosopher's Stone. I know he doesn't treat you great, but he and Mum are friends! Not to mention that Professor Dumbledore trusts him. If that is not enough for you, then let's just say, for the sake of argument, that you're right and Snape is threatening Quirrell to find a way to steal the stone. It wouldn't be your job to stop him. Please leave that to Professor Dumbledore.

Now, I'll assume that you're right about what you heard, and Snape was threatening Quirrell. Don't worry, Quirrell is a lot tougher than he looks. I don't know why he is a wreck in class, but I'd see him around Hogwarts sometimes, and he was acting perfectly normal. He didn't even have a stutter. So maybe he's just nervous in front of students for some reason.

Of course Siberia is still cold. It's in the tundra, Nathan, it never gets warm here. The first time I'll see some land that isn't frozen will be after I Portkey back to England for summer vacation. Fortunately, it's only another two months for me. Too bad that you have to wait until the middle of June to get out.

Please, don't do anything stupid.

Your brother,
Harry

Harry stood up and made his way to the Owlery. Hopefully his brother would get the message and forget the entire thing with the Philosopher's Stone.

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Bloody Books

Durmstrang Library, April 15th

Placing his book on the table, Harry cast the tempus spell and casually gazed at the time. He suddenly felt his blood run cold. It couldn't be that late. Harry repeated the spell twice just to make sure he hadn't done anything wrong before groaning and smacking his head on the table.

Calypso was going to kill him.

He was supposed to help her with some of the charms for her final project over an hour ago. By now she had probably given up waiting, banged on his door a few times, and started searching the school so she could drag him off somewhere to hex him in private.

Harry doubted that Calypso would understand the excuse "But I was reading a really good book and forgot." While she wasn't averse to spending time in the library, Calypso was a firm believer that one only got better at magic through practicing spells. As she had said the last time she had dragged him out of the library, "Having an encyclopedic knowledge of spells won't help you if you can't cast any of them."

"I wonder just what's going to happen to me when she finds me," Harry asked himself as he left the library. "She'll probably nicely ask me to show her how to charm the knife to dice again only to use the spell on me."

He and Calypso had grown a lot closer as of late, but that still didn't mean he wasn't a little wary of all the Dark Magic the girl knew. After all, it was a little difficult to be someone's friend when one minute you were joking, and the next she was cursing a third year.

Hoping that Calypso would have had enough time to calm down, Harry turned around and walked back into the library. It would be better if he had some witnesses for when Calypso eventually caught up with him. Calypso wasn't stupid enough to attack him in the library, at least not in front of Lady Doktor. The old librarian had been keeping a very sharp eye on Harry ever since he had been attacked at the start of the spring term.

As Harry was about to sit down at a table near the entrance, he heard someone shout an incantation from behind him. Remembering what happened in January, Harry flung himself out of the chair as a nasty purple spell with yellow swirls passed over his head.

Harry watched in horror as the doors to the library flew open and Calypso snarled out, "Alright, Potter, where are y-"

The spell struck Calypso in her chest, causing her to scream and fall to her knees. Not a second later, Calypso's head snapped back and blood seemed to erupt out of her mouth, soaking the area around her. There was a mad rush as people began jumping out of their seats and turning tables over to avoid being hit.

Enraged, Harry turned to where the spell had come from. He didn't see anything at first, but then he noticed a slight haze quickly moving away from him down the history aisle. Recognizing the work of a poorly cast Disillusionment Charm, Harry jabbed his wand at the visual distortion and began casting. "Stupefy! Diffindo! Stupefy!"

The first spell missed and hit a book, showering the area in paper fragments. The cutting spell was stopped by the attacker casting a shield spell, but Harry's third spell managed to break the shield and give a partial hit. The Disillusionment Charm faded away, and Harry saw a blond haired boy stumble into the nearest bookshelf, but remain on his feet.

"Stupefy," a sharp voice snapped.

A red Stunning spell came from behind Harry, hitting the blond boy and dropping him to the ground with a loud THUMP. Harry turned

around and found a livid Lady Doktor stalking over towards him. The librarian's wand was pointed at the unconscious boy. Unable to help himself, Harry fired another stunning spell at the unconscious student.

"Do you know him?" Lady Doktor asked angrily.

Harry could only shake his head. The boy looked to be in his fifth year, and Harry had never seen him in his entire time at Durmstrang. He certainly wasn't in any of Harry's classes. Growling in frustration that some random student had tried to curse him behind his back, Harry raised his wand to send another curse. Before Harry could finish his incantation, Lady Doktor snatched his wand out of his hand and sent him a purposeful look that screamed 'do nothing.' Quickly Lady Doktor bound the boy tightly with ropes and levitated him away after returning Harry's wand. Harry followed discretely behind her, wanting to check on Calypso and to the boy get severely punished.

As Harry followed Lady Doktor, the crowd that had gathered parted to let them pass. When Harry made it back to the front of the library, he saw that the Highmaster had arrived along with Professor Rosemburg and Lady Shluga. While Calypso was no longer vomiting blood, none of the blood around the front of the library had yet to be Vanished. The sight of so much blood made Harry's stomach turn uncomfortably. Pushing a fourth year to the side, Harry emptied the contents of his stomach under a nearby table. He felt a hand on his back, and he looked up to see Viktor looking at him in concern.

"Is she okay?" Harry asked, gesturing to Calypso.

"I don't know," Viktor replied gravely.

"Highmaster!" exclaimed Lady Doktor. "This is the little shit who sent the curse. Harry Potter was able to Stun him before he could get away."

"Armando, take him to the dungeons!" Karkaroff snarled, spit flying from his mouth. "I must alert Ms. Rosier's father of the situation."

With a sharp nod, Armando Kosarev, the Charms professor, levitated the boy out of the library while Professor Rosmeburg levitated

Calypso to the hospital wing, Lady Shluga casting spells over her body as they walked.

Harry walked forward and locked eyes with the Lady Doktor. "What will happen to him?"

"He will be punished most severely for this, Mr. Potter, of that I can assure you," Lady Doktor growled. "I doubt very much that you will be seeing him for sometime after this."

Viktor placed his hand on Harry's shoulder. "We should go."

"Yes, Mr. Potter," Lady Doktor agreed. "Go check on your friend."

Knowing a dismissal when he heard one, Viktor guided Harry out of the library.

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Bedside Manner

Outside the Hospital Wing, Durmstrang, April 20th

"Harry," Viktor protested, "I really don't like this idea."

"Calypso's been in the hospital wing for five days, Viktor, and none of the Professors will tell me how she's doing. It only took a day for me to re-grow my entire scapula. I just want to make sure she's alright."

"Why don't you just ask Professor Rosemburg again? Maybe he'll tell you something this time."

Harry snorted and gave Viktor a look that clearly said 'Are you kidding me?' Harry had tried asking his teachers, and even Lady Doktor, about Calypso's condition, but all they told him was that the situation was being handled. Harry had gone to the hospital wing under the pretense of a migraine yesterday, and he knew that Calypso had been given her own room at the end of the ward. Harry wasn't sure what was wrong with her, but he wanted to at least make sure she was going to be alright.

"But why do I have to be the one who gets cursed?" Viktor whined.

"Oh, come on, Viktor, it's just a Babbling Curse. It won't even hurt you. It'll just take some time for the matron to fix."

"I still don't like this," Viktor said half-heartedly.

"Viktor," Harry said softly, "Calypso's my friend."

"Someday you will have to tell me how that happened," Viktor said, unable to understand why Harry would befriend the violent girl who was known for viciously cursing people with the Dark Arts. Outside of Harry, not a single person even seemed to care what happened to Calypso. In fact, there was more concern over Calypso's attacker, Reginald Burke, than Calypso. Burke hadn't been seen since Professor Kosarev levitated him into the dungeons, and it was rumored that Calypso's father had arrived and driven the boy insane with the Cruciatus.

"Stop stalling," Harry said as he took out his wand.

"Fine," Viktor grumbled, "but if we get in trouble, I'm going to send Kira to kick your ass."

"I'm terrified," Harry said sarcastically as he sent the curse at Viktor. "Did it work?"

"Idon'tknowifitworkedornotIdon'?Ohwowthisis—"

"Alright it worked, let's go." Harry said, dragging Viktor around the corner and into the Hospital Wing. "Lady Shluga, there's been an accident."

The large matron of the hospital wing was quickly upon them in seconds. "What happened?" she demanded.

"Viktor and I were practicing some spells when he tripped and fell into a Babbling Curse. I don't know the counter, and the book said that if done wrong..."

"Yes, Mr. Potter, you did the right thing bringing him here. Thor's bloody hammer, I hate this time of year. Students playing around with magic beyond their ability and constantly causing accidents when they can't control their final projects. Well, take a seat Mr. Krum, you're going to be stuck here until I can find the proper counter-curse. At least you're not physically harmed." Lady Shluga left Viktor sitting on a bed and quickly walked towards her office where she kept some of her more obscure healing books.

"__"

"Silencio. Relax, Viktor. The Babbling Curse is just a tad bit obscure. It'll probably take her an hour or so to find the right counter and figure out how to do it," Harry whispered as he left his glaring friend sitting on the bed and walked toward Calypso's private room.

Tapping his wand against the doorknob, Harry tried to use Alohomora, but the door didn't budge. Damn. He had really hoped that there wouldn't be any more security on the room. He was about to try a more advanced unlocking charm when an angry voice spoke up from directly behind him. "Just what do you think you're doing, boy?"

Harry spun around, and found himself looking up at an angry-looking man with white hair and dark brown eyes. The man wasn't dressed in the traditional blood-red robes of Durmstrang; instead, he was wearing a black robe with a cloak over his shoulders. His wand was out, and it was glowing a particularly nasty shade of violet as its owner pointed it at Harry's chest.

"I asked you a question," the man growled, pressing his wand to Harry's chest. "Why are you trying to break into my daughter's room?"

Harry's eyes widened in horror as he realized who had caught him trying to break into Calypso's room.

With narrowed eyes, Calypso's father raised his wand from Harry's chest and made a slight flicking gesture. It was a seemingly innocuous wand movement, but Harry felt all the air in his lungs leave and he fell to floor gasping for breath.

"I shall ask one more time before I get upset," Mr. Rosier said calmly. "Why were you trying to break into my daughter's room?"

"I wanted to make sure she was alright," Harry gasped from the floor.

Mr. Rosier paused and looked curiously at the boy on the ground in front of him. "And why would the health of my daughter be of interest to you?"

Harry slowly picked himself up, slightly rubbing chest. "Calypso's my friend, sir, and it's a little bit my fault that she was hurt. I just wanted to make sure she was going to be alright."

The man seemed to appraise Harry for a moment before he lowered his wand. "So, you are the Potter brat that Burke was attempting to curse. I should have realized. Up close you do resemble your father, though you seem to have inherited your mother's eyes," Mr. Rosier said disapprovingly.

Not wanting to think about when Calypso's father might have been close enough discern his mother's exact eye color, Harry hesitantly asked, "Is Calypso going to be alright?"

Mr. Rosier simply stared at Harry for a long moment, and he quickly became very uncomfortable. Harry felt like he was being judged, and the last thing he wanted at the moment was to appear lacking.

"The curse that Burke cast was supposed to be an entrail-expelling curse, but the fool hadn't practiced it enough. Naturally, he screwed it up. Do you know what happens when you cast a spell that you have no control over, Potter?" Mr. Rosier demanded.

Harry nodded hesitantly. "They're very dangerous. Back at Hogwarts I destroyed a lot of furniture practicing the Engorgement charm."

"While in some cases an imperfect spell will have no effect, more often than not, like your failed engorgement charm and Mr. Burke's entrail-expelling curse, an imperfect spell's effects are very different from those of a properly executed spell." Mr. Rosier waved his wand

and then taped it against Calypso's door. Harry heard the click of a lock, and Mr. Rosier pushed it open. Harry wasn't going to follow, but Mr. Rosier held it open for him. "Well, you wanted to see her condition, did you not?"

Harry nodded his head and stepped into the room. It was very dark at first, but a wave from Mr. Rosier's wand caused several torches to ignite. Harry simply took in the sight in front of him. Calypso was resting on the bed, seemingly unconscious. She looked fine, but the angry look on Mr. Rosier's face told Harry that clearly wasn't the case. "What happened?"

"Instead of causing the intestines to be vomited out, the spell acted as a very powerful rupturing curse, and destroyed both her small and large intestines as well as doing indiscriminate damage to other organs," Mr. Rosier said, looking murderous. "She will recover, but having to repair and grow back internal organs is not as simple as replacing a bone or rebuilding a muscle. It is a very dangerous process, involving dozens of potions, some of which are very difficult to brew, making acquiring them difficult. She will remain in the hospital wing for several more days at the very least. Now, has this satisfied your curiosity?"

"Yes, sir," Harry said looking at the prone figure of Calypso. It felt very odd seeing the girl look so vulnerable.

"Good," Mr. Rosier said. "Now, do you care to explain your relationship with my daughter?"

Harry swallowed nervously. "We've been studying with one another for a while, sir. Calypso has been helping me with some spells and my final project so I can skip my second year Dark Arts class."

"My daughter is hardly benevolent, Mr. Potter. Why would she help you?"

"Well, it's not exactly one-sided. I'm in third year Charms and Transfiguration, and I've been helping her so that she can test into her third year Charms and Transfiguration class next year."

"I see. You said you were my daughter's friend. However, Calypso has not ever mentioned having a friend," Mr. Rosier said snidely.

Harry looked a little down at the news. "Well, I can't speak for her, but I consider her a friend, sir. That spell was meant for me, and I just wanted to make sure she was alright."

As Harry was about to leave Calypso's private room, Mr. Rosier spoke up. "It doesn't bother you, Potter, that your father and I met on a few less-than-friendly occasions during the war?"

Harry froze. His father hadn't told him and his brother a lot about the war, and it took every ounce of self control Harry possessed not to turn around and gape at Mr. Rosier. Harry took a moment to calm himself. Getting mad or defensive would not be a good thing. Not now. Slowly, he thought about what he knew. The Rosiers were Death Eaters. His father was very close to Dumbledore and a member of the Order of the Phoenix, an organization he had overheard his uncle Sirius talking about once with his parents after they thought he and Nathan had gone to sleep. It wasn't completely impossible that that Mr. Rosier and his father would have fought. The thought made some bile rise up in his throat. Harry found it very hard to imagine his father in any kind of war that didn't involve pranks.

Slowly, Harry turned around and saw that Mr. Rosier was still waiting for some sort of reaction or comment. Doing his best not to show his nervousness, Harry quietly said, "It was a war. You were on different sides."

"How very... understated, Potter, but correct, I suppose," Mr. Rosier commented darkly. "What if I told you that I didn't want you near my daughter?"

"I doubt that's up to either of us," Harry said more boldly than he felt. "If I told Calypso I couldn't help her anymore, well, she would probably yell at me, then curse me, and afterwards say that we aren't done until she says we are."

Harry wasn't sure, but for a second he thought that he saw a small smile start to form on Mr. Rosier's face before the man went back to

being frighteningly stoic. "Yes, my daughter can be quite tenacious at getting what she wants. She got that from her mother, who was just as unyielding."

After a few tense moments, Harry realized that Mr. Rosier wasn't going to say anything else to him, so he subtly left the room. He didn't know what to think of Mr. Rosier. The man appeared to care about Calypso, but Harry was more than a little bit intimidated by him.

As Harry approached the exit of the Hospital Wing, he spotted an irritated-looking Viktor being fussed over by Lady Shluga, and he couldn't help but smile at the Bulgarian's blabbering protests to being poked with her wand.

"All better?" he asked.

"No! This curse doesn't want to be taken off, and now she thinks it'll take more than—"

Lady Shluga quickly cast a silencing charm on Viktor, who was now doing his best to send a murderous glare at Harry. "I'm afraid Mr. Krum is going to have to spend the night. I have done the counter-curse, but it looks like it won't take effect for a few hours. His speech will slowly return to normal, but not all at once. That was a nasty curse, Mr. Potter. You should perhaps practice someplace safer so that other students don't get harmed."

"I will, ma'am. See you later, Viktor," Harry said, smiling innocently at the angry Bulgarian.

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Rising Tensions

Main Hall, Durmstrang, April 26th

"So is it true?" Kira asked, immediately sitting down across from Viktor and Harry. "Were Dirk and Heinrich really wearing that in your Dark Arts class yesterday?"

Viktor looked up from his conversation with Harry and his face immediately darkened. "Yes," he said angrily. "I duel Dirk next class, and I'm going to make him wish he was never born."

Harry was very surprised at the sudden rage in his friend's voice. Since he had known Viktor, Harry found that very little truly upset his friend. While Harry knew that Viktor didn't appreciate how he was treated by many of his peers, he tended to use that as motivation to become better, not as a reason to hurt them. So why was Viktor so upset about what someone were wearing?

"What happened?" Harry asked.

Much to Harry's surprise, it was Kira who answered. "These two assholes came into class with Grindelwald's mark embroidered on their clothing," she spat. "The fact that their families were known supporters of his only makes it worse."

"I didn't know Grindelwald had a mark," Harry admitted. "Is it like the Dark Mark that You-Know-Who used?"

"You British and your stupid You-Know-Who nonsense," Kira said disapprovingly. "He was an incredibly powerful wizard, but he is dead. Can't you call him by his name? I don't want to sit at the table listening to you talk about He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named all time. Call him the Dark Lord if you are too terrified to actually speak a name."

"Fine," Harry snapped. "Was Grindelwald's mark like the Dark Lord's?"

"No, Grindelwald's mark is three shapes. A straight line within a circle, which is enclosed in a triangle," Viktor explained still looking upset.

"I think I've seen that before," Harry said slowly. "Isn't that etched into the wall in a few places?"

Viktor's face hardened. "Yes. Grindelwald was a student here, and he carved the markings into the stone before he was expelled in his sixth year. He then managed to charm them so that they can never be removed."

"There is a rumor that the marks are actually cursed," Kira added. "Grindelwald conquered Durmstrang during his rise to power, and he easily could have worked a curse into the school's wards. Either way, only three professors have ever tried to remove the marks, and they all committed suicide not a week after they started working to remove them."

Both disgusted and slightly impressed at Grindelwald's impressive feat of magic, Harry asked, "So these two Germans in your Dark Arts class wore the mark yesterday?"

"Yes. My grandfather was the Minister of Defense in Bulgaria during Grindelwald's rise," Viktor explained. "When he refused to surrender to Grindelwald, even after my country had been defeated, Grindelwald tortured and killed him as punishment. Wearing the mark of that monster is an insult to everything my grandfather fought and died for. I will not let them get away with it."

Harry nodded in understanding. If people around Hogwarts suddenly decided to embroider the Dark Mark on their uniforms because they thought it was cool, most of the student body, himself included, would be screaming for their blood. Harry was about to suggest a particularly nasty hex that would cause someone to run around in circles until they passed out when Calypso sat down across from him.

"You're back!" Harry exclaimed.

With a slight smile on her face Calypso nodded. "I was released earlier today."

"Really? Why weren't you in Spell Creation?" Harry asked.

A strange expression flickered across Calypso's face, but before Harry could comment on it, she said, "My father had to talk to me about some things, and Lady Shluga had to explain the potions regimen I still need to take."

"Potter why don't you and Rosier go somewhere else," Kira said bluntly. "Now that she's back gracing us with her presence, you don't have to follow Viktor around like a lonely kneazle."

"So what have I missed?" Calypso asked, completely ignoring Kira.

Somewhat surprised to see both Viktor and Kira glaring at Calypso, Harry said, "Well, after you were cursed, Karkaroff ordered that Burke be taken to the dungeons. He hasn't been seen since, although there have been some...rumors."

"Let me guess." Calypso rolled her eyes. "Everyone believes that my father has tortured the sod into madness, or that I wasn't even seriously hurt, and have spent that last few weeks practicing Dark Arts spells on poor innocent Burke under my father's tutelage."

"Um, yes. Among other things," Harry said uncomfortably.

"Idiots," Calypso scowled. "My father told me that Burke was suspended, and his family has decided to remove him from Durmstrang. So, unfortunately, I won't be able to curse him anytime soon. Anything else interesting happen?"

Harry shrugged. "Two people showed up in Viktor's Dark Arts class wearing Grindelwald's mark."

"And I thought Burke was the stupidest person at this school," Calypso muttered. "I do hope someone cursed them for it."

"Dirk and Heinrich's families supported Grindelwald. Just like yours did, Rosier," Viktor growled out.

Suddenly Harry understood just why Viktor did not like the idea of him hanging out with Calypso. It would seem that Voldemort wasn't the only Dark Lord the Rosier family had supported in the past century.

"My grandfather supported Grindelwald, Krum, and he was killed over fifty years ago. My father was fifteen when Grindelwald was stopped, and I couldn't care less about the "Greater Good." If you have a problem with me, let's hear it," Calypso said challenging.

Viktor looked surprised. "You do not support Grindelwald's beliefs?"

"I do to a degree," Calypso admitted. "I think Muggles are all useless, but I don't think that all Muggle-borns should be killed on sight. That said, Muggle-borns don't possess nearly as many talents as purebloods and halfbloods."

"Excuse me? You're joking, right?" Harry said angrily. His mother was Muggle born, and she was one of the most talented people he knew!

Calypso was momentarily surprised by Harry's outburst before a smile crossed her face. "Relax, Harry, I don't mean they are any less magical. Just that Muggle-borns don't develop rare talents like becoming Animagi or Metamorphmagi. Those abilities tend to only appear in purebloods and half-bloods. You should know that, Harry. The Potters are well known for being Animagi."

Harry's anger quickly turned to confusion. Was that true? He hadn't thought about why his mother wasn't an Animagus like his dad or Uncle Sirius. He just assumed she never bothered to learn it because she seemed to enjoy Potions and Charms more than Transfiguration. Was it because she couldn't become an Animagus? "So you're saying that Muggle-borns don't have innate special magical talents?"

"There are always a few exceptions," Calypso conceded, "but for the most part, yes. Muggle-borns tend not to have any special talents beyond the basic ability to perform magic. Of course, while it doesn't happen often, there are some pureblood families that never developed a single rare ability either." Calypso looked over at Kira and smirked at the older girl. "You'd know a lot about that, wouldn't you, Megara?"

Surprised, Harry turned to look at Kira, who was practically fuming in rage. "Shut it, bitch. Hades, you'd think nearly being killed would humble you."

"Still bitter about being the laughingstock of pureblood society, I see," Calypso taunted before turning her attention away from Kira. "Did that answer your question, Krum?"

Viktor didn't look exactly pleased, but Harry could tell he wasn't as angry at Calypso as before. "So you still think you are better than Muggle-borns, but you do not dislike them or advocate their deaths?" he clarified.

"I don't know if I dislike Muggle-borns or not. I've never met one," Calypso commented casually, "but yes, I know I am better than them. I'm committed to being a powerful witch, and my family line has produced Seers, Metamorphmagi, Ani—"

"Why don't you just mate with a troll, Rosier," Kira spat. "That way you can get some of their magically resistant skin mixed into your oh-so-wonderful bloodline."

"The Rosier family has developed enough talents on our own without needing to lower ourselves to breeding with magical creatures." A dark smirk appeared on Calypso's face. "But for someone whose bloodline is as pathetic as yours, Megara, maybe that would be an option to consider. Maybe then your family won't be continually rejected at the Athens Academy of Magic."

As Kira looked ready to draw her wand, Harry whispered to Viktor, "Do you want to get out of here?"

With a look at the two bickering witches, who now seemed oblivious to their presence at the table, Viktor nodded. "Yes. Do you want to go fly?"

After a moment, Harry agreed. While he had very little interest in flying, that certainly didn't mean he didn't know how, and Calypso would not be happy when she realized he had decided to leave while she was arguing with Kira. The last place she would ever think to look for him would be on the Quidditch pitch.

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Harry's Room, Durmstrang, May 11th

Harry,

To answer your question, no, I can't become an Animagus. I don't have the ability. Your father tried to help me find my animal near the end of the war, thinking that it would be a good way to escape from Death Eaters in case I was ever cornered and couldn't Apparate. I was never able to develop the talent, though that's not very surprising. Becoming an Animagus is an exceptionally rare talent amongst wizards and witches. I think it's less than 10 percent of all witches and wizards who have the ability. The fact that your father and Sirius were both able to become Animagi is a slight statistical improbability.

Why the sudden interest in Animagi? You're not thinking about becoming one, are you? Please tell me you're not. It is a very dangerous process, Harry. Your father didn't want to tell you and your brother because he was afraid of scaring you, but your uncle Sirius had a very bad accident when practicing the transformation during his fourth year. He was too full of himself and tried to force the transformation before he was ready. Had your father not been there to return him to human form, Sirius could have died.

How are your projects going? The idea of a final project is very interesting, and your uncle Remus and I agree that if Hogwarts had something like that, we would have been terrified that our projects weren't good enough. I hope you're handling everything alright. Your father and I think a spell chain would be a very impressive project for your Defense class. I didn't even find out about them until my fourth year, but Professor Snape was apparently familiar with them at your age. When I told him that you were trying to make one, he asked if he could see a copy of the chain when you finish it.

As far as your Charms project is concerned, I think a Space-Enhancement Charm is a very good idea. I'm sure with enough practice, you'll be able to successfully cast it. While I didn't learn the spell until the start of my fourth year, I remember it wasn't very hard to master.

Your father and Uncle Sirius say hello, and Uncle Remus is wondering if you could tell him anything more about the Durmstrang library. He's very curious about how students know to avoid the dangerous or cursed books. I admit I'm a little curious about that as

well. I remember Madam Pince telling me about a particularly nasty book that Hogwarts had in the Restricted section that made someone's eyes bleed the longer they read, and the book was charmed to keep the reader's attention. Please tell me you're being careful.

All my love,

Mum

Putting the letter down on his desk, Harry was slightly surprised that Calypso was right, and his mother couldn't become an Animagus. He hadn't realized just how rare Animagi were in the wizarding world. Harry just assumed that his uncle Remus hadn't become one since he was a werewolf. But less than ten percent had the ability? That wasn't a lot at all. When one considered that it takes a lot of work to become an Animagus, Harry suddenly realized why not all the professors at Hogwarts were transforming into cats like Professor McGonagall.

As he read over his mother's warning about not trying the transformation, Harry chuckled slightly. He could just see his mum yelling at his father for putting ideas in his head, and that he shouldn't have told Nathan and him all those stories about how he would sneak into the Forbidden Forest with Sirius and Remus when they were at Hogwarts.

The bit about what had nearly happened to Sirius was shocking. Harry knew that the transformation was difficult, but to actually die attempting it? Harry was very glad his father had been there. Sirius could go overboard with pranks sometimes, but Harry couldn't imagine growing up without him there. Uncle Sirius was always able to cheer him and Nathan up when they were younger, and to not have him around would have been horrible.

Taking out the spell chain that he had perfected the night before with Calypso's help, Harry cast the duplication charm on it. He'd send it to his mother so she could give it to Professor Snape. Spell chains were a series of spells where the last wand movement of the first spell flowed into the next spell's first wand movement. The result was a

near endless stream of spells that immediately put one's opponent on the defensive.

That wasn't to say they were an unbeatable tactic. All an opponent had to do to stop a spell chain was to throw the caster off at one point and the entire chain would be ruined. When Calypso was explaining them to Harry, she demonstrated how they were used in a duel. Harry had been very impressed, and the fact that spell chains weren't taught until the very beginning of third year Dark Arts meant that the project would be advanced enough to let him skip the second year class.

Harry was pleasantly surprised that his mum thought he could easily do the Expansion Charm. His Charms project was proving to be more difficult than he thought, even though the charm itself wasn't that hard to cast. The problem was keeping the room that size indefinitely. A simple finite would cause the room to shrink back to normal, and Harry knew Professor Kosarev would test to see if the charm was resistant to the simplest canceling spell.

Unfortunately, permanent charms, or enchantments, were well beyond anything Harry could do. He had tried to practice casting an enchantment to expand a room, just to see if he was capable of it. He had chosen an out-of-the-way storage closet on the first floor to practice, and the results were spectacular... in a very bad way. The closet walls that Harry had tried to enchant somehow managed grow teeth, and the closet started constricting to chew the things inside of it! Harry had left as soon as he realized his error, and Viktor had casually mentioned the next day how the Durmstrang caretaker was now swearing revenge against a student that tried to kill him.

After the debacle of the storage closet, Harry had abandoned his enchanting efforts. He did not want to screw up again and get into trouble. The Durmstrang caretaker made Mr. Filch at Hogwarts look like a harmless puffskein. He also wasn't sure, but he was suspicious that Calypso might have figured out that it was him who was responsible for what happened to the caretaker. She had looked right at him and started to laugh after Viktor told his story. She also seemed to have a knowing smirk on her face for the rest of the day whenever she looked at him.

Still, since he couldn't enchant the walls, Harry only had one option left. There was a way to tie a spell into an object so that the finite incantatem had to be directed at the object in order to cancel the spell's function. It was used by wizards who, like Harry, found enchantments to be very difficult and easy to mess up. They were also used when someone only wanted a charm to be in effect for a certain amount of time. While an enchantment could be removed, it was difficult to do so.

The problem was that preparing an object to hold a charm was difficult. Most often, people just bought pre-prepared objects beforehand and then just worried about casting the charm. Harry was tempted to just do that. After all, making a receptacle that could be used to hold a charm was far more difficult than the actual Enlarging Charm Harry was going to use for his project. After reading a book on their creation in the library, however, Harry felt that it was a challenge he could do. While not advanced enough to be on the Charms N.E.W.T. examination, the spell was frequently used as a bonus question on the Charms O.W.L. Harry enjoyed the challenge, but he had ordered a few pre-prepared receptacles just in case he didn't manage to succeed.

Working on creating a receptacle was what Harry spent most of his free time doing now. It was a very complicated process. There were a half-dozen spells that needed to be cast on the object, and if one of them failed or was cast incorrectly, it wouldn't work. Viktor had found the entire process fascinating, and had asked several questions about how it was done. Harry had tried to explain it, but it seemed like the process was just a little beyond his Bulgarian friend's grasp of Charms.

Harry chuckled nervously at the last part of his mother's letter. Just how did students know not to touch certain cursed Dark Arts books? It turned out that a list was provided to every student at the start of the year, and it included the names of all the cursed books in the library. Due to an administrative oversight, Harry was never given the list, and the amount of time he spent in the library, or talking with Lady Doktor, made everyone assume that he had received a copy. A few weeks ago, Calypso had commented to Viktor about how next

year the list was supposed to grow by several books, and Harry had asked what they were talking about.

They had explained and shown him a copy of the list, which Harry immediately duplicated. Viktor and Calypso then seemed to bond while simultaneously calling him a complete and total idiot for browsing through the Dark Arts section without knowing which books could cause him serious harm. When Harry pointed out that Calypso had stopped him from reading *Sonnets of a Sorcerer*, Calypso had bitingly responded that she just assumed he wasn't paying attention to the title or had forgotten it was on the list. Needless to say, both Viktor and Calypso left the room sometime later after making sure Harry knew he was an exceptionally lucky but very stupid Englishman.

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It's Good to Have Friends

Harry's Room, Durmstrang, May 20th

"I can't believe it worked!" exclaimed Harry as he pulled Calypso into a hug.

"I know. That was an incredible piece of magic, Harry. You should tell, Professor Kosarev," she suggested.

"I agree," Viktor said seriously.

Harry smiled as he looked over his expanded room. He had only managed yesterday to put the finishing touches on the object he would be using to tie his Space-Enhancement Charm to, and today was his test to see if he could use it for his final project.

"Let's go," Viktor said, "we should go tell Professor Kosarev."

"Now?" Harry asked in surprise. He had planned on waiting until it was his turn to show his final project.

"Definitely now," Calypso agreed. "If you wait until later in the week, he's going to be busy looking at final projects."

"I'll go and bring him here. I need to speak with him about moving my final project up a day. I need to be in Bulgaria to start training with the junior national team by the 26th, and I need to be gone by Friday. The Highmaster has already given me permission to miss the leaving feast." Krum paused at the door and then added. "I will also get Kira. She will be impressed by this."

"More like jealous because she can't cast this kind of magic," Calypso muttered.

Harry looked at Calypso curiously. "What exactly is the deal between the two of you?"

"I don't like her," Calypso said succinctly.

"Just because her family doesn't have any magical talents?" asked Harry disapprovingly.

"Please," said Calypso condescendingly. "If it were just that, I would simply ignore her like the nobody she is. She's the one who started it though. In my first Dark Arts class, she implied that because my father is friends with the Highmaster, I used favoritism to get into the class. After I embarrassed her in our first duel, she's hated me ever since. But believe me, the feeling's mutual."

Harry shook his head. "That's really stupid. If you used favoritism, you probably would have failed out of the class. Why would she even think that?"

"Because she's a jealous little harpy with an inferiority complex. Still, the rarity of people testing into third year classes made some of my classmates believe her."

"It can't be that rare. I got into both third year Transfiguration and Charms," Harry reminded her.

"How is it that you know so much about some aspects of Durmstrang, yet nothing of others?" Calypso asked. "Harry, only a handful of

people have ever tested into two third year classes, and no one has ever managed three."

"Really?"

"Don't sound so surprised," Calypso said. "There is a reason most of our peers dislike you, but don't try to hurt you."

"People have twice tried to curse me in the back, Calypso." Harry pointed out. "I'm pretty sure that counts as trying to hurt me."

Calypso rolled her eyes. "You've been attacked what, two? Three times? Do you know the number of times most the kids in our year have been hexed or cursed by older students? Before I started showing how vicious I was in duels, I couldn't walk to class without having a hex shot at me. Ask Viktor about his first term here, and how often the older years cursed him. It's almost like a rite of passage for the older students to pick on the younger years. But you, Harry, you lucked out. When we got back to school in January, Karkaroff started handing out serious punishments to anyone using offensive magic in the corridors. That alone made people wary to openly attack you."

"I didn't know that," Harry admitted. "I remember the rule was changed, but –"

"No one ever wants to be the student Karkaroff uses to make an example out of. Not to mention that you quickly started showing what you were capable of in Transfiguration and Charms. People might have been jealous, but few of them were stupid enough to go overboard. The fact that you've made it known you're testing into the third year Dark Arts class, and most of all, that you're friends with me, has convinced people to mostly leave you alone." Seeing that Harry still wasn't getting her point, Calypso decided to be blunt. "Potter, people are scared of you!"

"What? No way." Harry said completely flabbergasted.

"Do you know who is synonymous with testing into multiple third year classes?" Calypso asked.

"No."

"Gellert Grindelwald. He tested into third year Dark Arts and Transfiguration. There have been others, but Grindelwald is the one that everyone remembers. Need I say more?"

"Ugh, no, that's...wow," Harry replied. "So people actually are scared... of me?"

"Of course. You are my friend, and anyone who is friends with me must be evil," Calypso said sarcastically. "Ever since people realized that we hang out, and that I've been helping you prepare to jump into your third year Dark Arts class, there have been rumors that I've twisted your mind and convinced you to become the next Dark Lord."

"Are you serious?" Harry asked in horror. "Why is this the first time I'm hearing about this?"

"Would you talk about how evil an up-and-coming Dark Lord is in front of him?" Calypso asked.

"But how did you know?"

Calypso just smirked. "I have my ways."

"But why didn't Viktor tell me?" Harry demanded.

"Viktor?" Calypso laughed. "He's been the subject of insults and rumors about how stupid he is since his first year. He doesn't pay any attention to that stuff. And neither should you, actually. Let the idiots have their rumors. If it keeps them from bothering us, I don't particularly care what they say."

While Harry wasn't comfortable being known as a future Dark Lord by his peers, if thinking he was some evil Dark Lord in training would stop the other kids from bothering him, well he could live with that. "Fine. I think it's stupid, but whatever."

"Exactly," Calypso said with a beaming smile. "Let them say what they want. It's not like they really matter anyway, at least that's what my father says."

Not particularly liking that he was agreeing with Mr. Rosier, Harry decided to change the subject. "So we're friends, huh? Your dad said you didn't have a friend who you studied with."

The smile on Calypso face didn't fade at all. "He was mistaken."

As Harry returned Calypso's smile, the door opened and Professor Kosarev walked inside followed by Viktor and Kira. "Potter," Kosarev said as he appraised Harry's obviously expanded room, "Krum said you had something to show me, and that I would be impressed."

"Um, yes, sir. For my final project, I wanted demonstrate the Space-Enlargement-Charm," Harry explained.

"Clearly, you managed to succeed. I seriously doubt Ms. Rosier, Mr. Krum, or Ms. Megara would have been able to cast such a charm," Kosarev commented casually, not appearing at all concerned that he just insulted the ability of several of his students. "Finite," he said, pointing his wand at the nearest wall. The stone flashed red briefly, but it didn't reverse the charm. "Impressive, Potter. Surely you didn't manage to enchant it?"

"No, sir. I tried to enchant it, but I wasn't able to do it," Harry admitted, unable to meet his professor's eyes.

"Since your room appears to not have suffered any dramatic magical change, I guess I can assume that you are responsible for Yuri's biting closet?" Kosarev chuckled.

Harry blushed, but didn't confirm that it was him. Krum and Kira both shared identical looks of surprise at that information while Calypso just smirked in a knowing way.

"So, where is it?" asked Kosarev. "If the room isn't enchanted, that leaves only one option."

Harry took out the small quill he had been using as his receptacle and showed it to Professor Kosarev. The professor ran his wand over it a few times, mumbling several different incantations. The quill glowed briefly, and Harry saw Kosarev looked mildly annoyed before canceling the spell. "I hope you didn't pay too much for that, Mr. Potter. I doubt it will last more than a few days, a week at the most."

Calypso smirked. "Considering that he made it, I don't think he overpaid, sir."

Kosarev looked at Calypso and then turned back to Harry. "Is that true, Mr. Potter? Did you make this?"

"Yes, sir," Harry said proudly.

"Impressive. How long did it take you?" Kosarev asked as he began inspecting the quill with a much greater interest.

"A long time, sir. I can't count the number of objects I destroyed. That's why I eventually started using quills, they're cheap to replace."

"This is your first successful one?" Kosarev asked.

"Yes, sir, I actually only finished it yesterday. I bought a few working ones just in case I wasn't able to complete it."

"A wise decision. I wouldn't have believed it possible for anyone to create such an object at your age. I seriously doubt I'll be seeing anything more impressive than this from your class, Mr. Potter. The Space-Enhancement-Charm would have let you advance with a J, but I doubt anything will be able to top this. Come by my office later, and bring that quill with you. I'll show you a few ways to make the charms on it last longer. We'll be removing the charms currently placed on it, so make sure your room is back to its original size before you bring it. A truly impressive project, Mr. Potter," Kosarev said, gracing his student with a rare smile and leaving the room.

"I told you he would be impressed," Krum said, proud of his friend's achievement.

Kira looked a little annoyed. "How did you do it?"

"Practice," Harry said simply. "Viktor could tell you all the times I messed up making it."

"He set himself on fire... twice," Viktor immediately said.

Harry felt his cheeks heat up in embarrassment. "It was just a figure of speech, Viktor."

"That one goblet he used turned acidic and melted," Calypso added.

"Do you remember that piece of parchment that exploded?" asked Viktor

Calypso laughed. "How could I forget? It gave him that paper cut he wouldn't stop whining about until you took him to Lady Shluga to have his hand healed. What about that key that just disappeared after he put the last charm on it. We were never able to find it, and nothing seemed to make it come back from wherever it went."

"Okay," Harry muttered, "you really don't have to retell all of my failures."

Viktor and Calypso simply ignored him as they continued to talk about the numerous times he messed up while trying to make his receptacle. Shaking his head, Harry couldn't help but smile as he listened to his friends jokingly recall some of the more embarrassing mistakes he made over the last few months. It was nice to have friends.

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Dragons and Dunderheads

Main Hall, Durmstrang, May 24th

"You look horrible," Calypso commented as Harry collapsed into the seat next to her.

"I just presented my Dark Arts project."

"And?" Calypso asked curiously.

"It went alright until Grausam demanded that I demonstrate my spell chain in an actual duel. He pulled some random fifth year out of the hall and told him he would get bonus points on his exam if he beat me," Harry grumbled..

"At least you're still conscious, and you apparently don't think you're hurt enough to need Lady Shluga," Calypso said looking him over. "Obviously, the fifth year must not have been that good of a duelist."

"I think I took him by surprise with the spell chain," Harry said honestly. "I managed to get halfway through the chain before he just Summoned a desk from behind me. I didn't see it and it smashed into my back. He Stunned me, and that was it."

"I'm sure Professor Grausam was disappointed that you weren't more badly cursed," Calypso commented as a brown Hogwarts owl landed next to Harry and offered its leg, showing that it had a letter.

Harry sighed. He hadn't heard from his brother in a while. Since he had told Nathan to leave the Philosopher's Stone alone, his brother had only written him once to say he managed to pull off Viktor's Quidditch move and that he led a Bludger right into Oliver Wood during practice. The Gryffindor Quidditch captain had been so impressed by the move that he didn't realize he had a broken nose until one of the team's Chasers pointed it out.

Harry,

First, let me say what happened wasn't my fault. You see, Hagrid had a dragon egg and was planning on raising it in his wooden hut. Ron wrote his older brother, who works on a dragon preserve in Romania, and Hermione and I had to sneak the dragon out of Hogwarts. We managed to get it out, but we were caught by Professor McGonagall leaving the North Tower.

Ron had been bitten by the dragon and was in the hospital wing when Draco Malfoy, of all people, borrowed his Potions book. Ron had the note from Charlie in the book, and it said when and where we were going to hand over the dragon. We were able to get the dragon out of the North Tower, but Draco went to McGonagall and managed to get us all in trouble.

Mum was furious about what happened because Professor Snape told her what Malfoy had claimed we had been doing. She and Mrs. Granger have apparently become friends, and Hermione and I both got letters, thankfully not Howlers, saying how dumb it was to try to get rid of the dragon. Hermione was seriously freaked out that her mother had found out. Did you know that the professors aren't required to send the parents of Muggle-borns notifications about when their children get detentions? Apparently it's a risk to the Statute of Secrecy for Hogwarts to constantly send owls into Muggle neighborhoods. They only send out notices if a Muggle-born student is seriously injured.

Now Hermione, Neville Longbottom, who was apparently trying to warn us about what Malfoy was going to do, Malfoy, and I all have detention for being up and out of bounds. Not to mention Professor McGonagall took 40 points EACH from all of us. Most of Gryffindor is treating us like we have the plague because we went from first to last the race for the House Cup.

By the way, Hermione says it's impossible for Durmstrang to be in Siberia because there is no way an owl would be able to deliver mail there. Owls need to hunt for their meals on longer deliveries and there wouldn't be enough food for an owl to survive a trip to Siberia. Funny, Harry. We'll see how much you like pranks over the summer.

Nathan

"Typical," Harry muttered, putting down the letter.

"What?" Calypso asked.

Harry just handed her the letter and let her read it.

"So your brother actually took it upon himself to get rid of a dragon for this Hagrid person? That's just asking for trouble. Had they been caught, they could have been arrested for the illegal transportation of a dragon." Calypso paused and re-read the last few lines of the letter. "And did he seriously believe Durmstrang was in Siberia?"

Harry sighed. "Just say it."

Calypso handed Harry back his letter. "Your brother is an idiot."

"I know. Believe me, I know," Harry said, shaking his head tiredly.

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An Omnimous Goodbye

Durmstrang, May 30th

With his trunk packed, his room returned to its normal size, and wearing his best pair of robes, Harry reflected on his first term at Durmstrang as he walked towards the main staircase. While there had certainly been some low points, Harry couldn't help but think they were worth it. For the first time ever, he had friends besides his brother. Viktor and Calypso were very different people, but Harry couldn't imagine this term without them. Harry briefly wondered if this was what Nathan felt like at Hogwarts with Ron and Hermione.

Harry noticed Calypso waiting by the staircase, and he couldn't help but smile at his friend.

"All packed?" she asked.

"Yes," Harry said, motioning to his trunk that was levitated behind him, "I can't believe the year is over."

"It is a little strange knowing that we won't be seeing each other until August," Calypso admitted, and Harry thought he heard a little bit of disappointment in her voice.

"True, but could you imagine me trying to explain having you over during the summer? Or trying to tell my parents that going to your house would be safe?" Harry asked.

Calypso laughed bitterly. "No. While it would be funny, I doubt your parents would appreciate the fact that you're friends with a dark and evil member of the Rosier family. They might force you to go back to Hogwarts."

Seeing that Calypso was actually upset by the situation, Harry couldn't help but reassure his friend. "Don't worry, I'll write often. I want to know everything you're going to be learning over the summer. I almost beat you in our last duel, and I can't have you getting too far ahead of me now."

"You? Almost beat me? Dream on, Potter. I was just going easy on you," Calypso replied haughtily.

"Then you had better be ready for next year," Harry said seriously. "I'm not just going to sit around and twiddle my thumbs over the summer."

"But what about the restriction of underage sorcery, Harry?" Calypso asked mockingly. "You can't practice spells over the summer, you're underage. You could get expelled."

"Git," Harry muttered, playfully shoving Calypso. After the Highmaster had warned all the students to not practice magic over the summer, Harry had commented that he didn't know what he was going to do for three months if he couldn't use magic. Calypso had promptly laughed at him and explained just how countries tracked underage magic. She had then mercilessly teased him for not knowing something that everyone else at Durmstrang already knew. Apparently, the Highmaster had to inform students of the restriction because it was an ICW decree that all schools do so, but Karkaroff didn't honestly expect anyone to abide by it.

"Well, I guess this is it," Harry said as he crossed the threshold of the Durmstrang wards.

"I guess so, have a good summer," Calypso said.

"You too. See you in August," Harry said before grabbing his trunk and activating his Portkey. A moment later he was gone.

Removing his invisibility cloak, Romulus Rosier appeared behind his daughter. "A very interesting young man. You're sure about him?"

Turning towards her father, Calypso shrugged. "No, not yet. He was only here for one term, and there is a lot I don't know about him. He did let some things slip about himself that I doubt even he realizes yet, but there is a lot about the Potter family that I don't know."

"Well it sounds like you have a summer project," Romulus said seriously. "It might be difficult finding out information on the Potters. Dumbledore protects them very closely."

"It will take some time," Calypso agreed.

"His scores are certainly impressive, and Rosemburg and Kosarev won't shut up about his potential," Romulus said more to himself than Calypso. "I think next year I shall pass judgment on him. Until then, you may continue your friendship with the boy."

"Father?" Calypso asked with wide eyes.

Romulus laughed at the fearful expression on his daughter's face. "Don't worry. I won't harm him, but I think it's about time I took a more vested interest in your education, Calypso. Igor has been complaining about Grausam's poor behavior of late."

"You... are going to teach?" Calypso asked, completely shocked.

"I certainly think I'm qualified, and Igor will not deny me the position if I ask for it. It will give me an opportunity to see exactly what the Potter boy is capable of."

Calypso nodded her head, knowing that the decision had already been made.

Next year was going to be very interesting.

A/N: This will be the last chapter I post for a little while. Don't worry, the story is by no means abandoned, but my schedule is simply crazy these next several weeks, and the next update will probably be sometime in June. Until then, I hope you enjoy the slight cliffhanger as well as the question about what will happen to the Philosopher's Stone. In case you haven't realized it yet, Durmstrang starts in August and ends in May whereas Hogwarts starts in September and ends in June. That's why the time line is a little off, and, yes, I did that intentionally. Feel free to guess why.

Chapter 7

Summer At The Hollow

Homecoming

Ministry of Magic, London, May 30th

Harry landed with a thump at the international Portkey arrival area in the Ministry of Magic.

"Name?" A portly witch asked immediately.

"Harry Potter," he replied, still a little shaken from the trip.

The witch gave him a curious look before she checked her clipboard and nodded her head. "You're early. We weren't expecting you until noon."

"Is that a problem?"

"No," the witch said, "but we will have to charge you an extra three sickles for an early processing fee."

"Well my father was supposed to pay, is there a place I can make a floo call?"

"Of course, behind you and to the left," she replied. "When you're done, go through the double doors and pay at the counter."

Nodding his head, Harry quickly followed the woman's directions and found the floo. He briefly wondered why people weren't leaving through the floo instead of paying before he realized that they probably had been specially spelled so that they could just be used to make calls. "Potter household," he said after sticking his head into the nearest empty fireplace. "Hello? Mum? Dad? Is anyone there?"

A few moments passed before Harry saw his mother's head appear in the fireplace. "Harry? Are you back already? We weren't expecting you for another hour."

"I know, I left a little early. Can you or Dad come and pick me up?"

Lily smiled. "Of course, we'll be there in a few minutes. Where are you exactly?"

"International Portkey Arrivals."

"Alright, we'll see you soon. Love you."

"Love you too, Mum."

Harry stood up and brushed some soot of his robes. After a few minutes spent sitting on a nearby bench, Harry saw the double doors open, and his parents enter.

"Harry," Lily said, giving her son an enthusiastic hug, "how was the trip home?"

Harry grimaced. "Bloody horrible, I hate International Portkeys."

"Language, Harry," Lily chided halfheartedly. "Was it really that bad?"

"Yes. I was stuck spinning like a top for over five minutes. It's a good thing I didn't eat beforehand or else I would have lost my lunch somewhere over Central Europe."

"Well, it's good to have you home," James said, looking a little relieved.

Harry smiled wistfully. "I can't wait to actually get home."

"Well lets give the Ministry its stupid tax and hurry back," James put forth.

After a very brief wait in line, James paid the three galleon tax for receiving a Portkey from Durmstrang, and the three Potters quickly floo'd back home. As soon as Harry was out of the floo grate, he pushed his trunk to the side and collapsed on the couch. "It's good to be home," he replied happily.

"Well I see you're already comfortable." Lily laughed. "Tell us all about your first term at Durmstrang."

"It was great!" Harry replied enthusiastically. "My Charms teacher pretty much assured me that I would be getting an M for my end of the year project."

"I still can't get over that scoring system," James said with a shake of his head.

"I like it," Harry said honestly.

"You say that now, but we'll see what you think about it when your grades come," James teased.

"I think I did alright," Harry said hesitantly. "I struggled in spell creation a little, but I know I passed in everything else."

Lily looked at her son in surprise. He'd never mentioned having any academic difficulties before. "What was so hard about spell creation?"

"Well it's just really complicated, and I had a lot of catching up to do," Harry explained. "First you have to figure out what you want your spell to do. Then you have to decide the type of magic that would best generate that effect whether it's a charm, curse, or transfiguration. After that, you need to try to create the wand movement and incantation. I had no idea how important the wand movement was for spells until I took that class. Did you know that a clockwise twirl is better for transfiguration, but a counter-clockwise twirl is used more in advanced charms?"

"No," James admitted, "I never realized that."

"So it was hard for you to catch up?" Lily asked.

"Very," Harry said seriously. "All that information about the effects different wand movements have were learned during the first term. When I got there, everyone already knew the basics."

Lily frowned slightly. "Didn't the instructor help you to catch up?"

"No," Harry said a little bitterly, "Professor Cherny spends all his time helping the upper years, and he said that he didn't have the time to re-teach the basics to a first year."

"Some teacher," Lily said angrily.

Harry nodded his head in agreement before saying, "He is a good teacher during class, but he just doesn't have the time or patience to help struggling younger students."

"Still," Lily said disapprovingly, "a professor should make time to help a struggling student, especially one who just transferred."

"I agree," James said.

"Well, I think I passed, so it's not that big of a deal," Harry said sheepishly.

"What did you do for your project?" Lily asked curiously.

"It wasn't all that great. You know how the lumossPELL sends out a white light?" Harry asked. After his parents' nodded, he added, "Well my spell lets you choose the color of the light."

"Well that certainly sounds interesting, I wish we could see it," Lily said.

Harry raised his wand and muttered, "Lumos Rojas." The room was soon filled with a reasonably bright red light.

"Harry James Potter! Are you trying to get expelled?" Lily demanded.

"I'm not, though," Harry said with a huge smile. "The ministry won't know I cast the spell."

Lily sagged into her chair as James snickered. "Who told you how they track underage magic?" he asked.

"A friend at school," Harry said cheerfully. "It made a lot of sense after I thought about it. I practiced all kinds of wand magic after I got my wand, but I never got a letter from the Ministry."

"When Nathan finds out, he's going to spend the summer pranking the entire house," muttered Lily.

Harry frowned slightly. His brother would do something like that, and the last thing he wanted was to worry about Nathan pranking him while he studied. Maybe he would just not mention it to his brother for the time being. If Nathan saw him doing magic, he could just say that Durmstrang didn't have the same restrictions as Hogwarts. "What did you think of the spell?"

"It was very nice. Can you do any other colors?" Lily asked.

"Blue and violet," Harry replied.

"Well that's certainly impressive," Lily commented.

"How long did that take you to make?" James asked.

"Three months," Harry said with a shake of his head. "Like I said, it's a very hard to make sure everything works. If you mess up, there could be really bad results."

"Was your Charms teacher impressed with the Space-Enhancement Charm?" Lily asked.

"I honestly can't believe you were able to cast that as a first year," James said, sounding very proud.

Harry blushed slightly. "Well, he said if my project was just the Space-Enhancement Charm, I would have been in the running for the top mark. I sort of did something else as well though."

"Oh?" Lily asked. "What else did you do?"

"I ended up making a semi-permanent enchantment receptacle," Harry said sheepishly.

"What!" Lily exclaimed. "How?"

Harry winced slightly and rubbed the back of his head where he accidentally burnt a chunk of his hair off while working on one of his receptacles. "A lot of practice,"

"Harry, explain," Lily demanded. "You are far too young to be playing around with that kind of magic. You could have seriously hurt yourself!"

"Well," Harry said nervously, "I was able to get the Space-Enhancement Charm fairly easily, but I needed a way to stop a simple finite from shrinking the room back to normal. I tried enchanting," Lily gasped, paled, and had to sit down on the couch, "but that failed rather spectacularly. So I had to tie the Space-Enhancement Charm to a semi-permanent enchantment receptacle. I bought some receptacles in case I couldn't make one, but I wanted to see if I could do it. It took me forever, but the day before my project was due, I was able to make a very basic one."

Lily grabbed her son's hands and forced him to look her in the eyes. "Harry, please tell me your professor was overseeing this project of yours."

"Of course he was," Harry lied.

"Thank Merlin," Lily said, relaxing a little. "Still, I can't believe you were able to make one. You're not even twelve!"

"Harry, I... that's incredible," James said in amazement. "You definitely inherited your mother's ability with charms."

"He's well beyond my ability, James. I couldn't have done that at his age," Lily replied. "I didn't learn how to make those until I was near the end of my fourth year, and that was with Professor Flitwick's help."

"Professor Kosarev was really impressed as well. He spent several hours showing me how to improve upon the receptacle I made. I think

I might be able to make one last for a month or two now. I'm going to try to make one and expand my room," Harry said excitedly.

Lily looked sternly at her son. "Harry, please show me any receptacle you make before you decide to alter your room." Seeing that her son was about to protest, Lily added, "I don't doubt your ability to make them, Harry, but I don't want your room to suddenly decompress around you while you're sleeping."

"Alright," Harry agreed, seeing his mother's point.

"So, Harry, tell us about your friends," James said.

The bright smile that appeared on Harry's face made Lily and James realize that sending Harry to Durmstrang was probably the best thing they could have done for their son. "Well, Viktor was my first friend. He's a few years older than me, but he's really nice, and he's absolutely amazing at Quidditch. I wanted to invite him over for a little bit this summer, but he made it onto his country's Junior National team."

"Wow," said James, "he must be good. What country is he representing?"

"Bulgaria. He wants to play professionally, and I think he could do it. He practices every day Dad, literally. There was a blizzard going on outside, and he was running around the Quidditch pitch with a warming charm on him."

Lily shook her head and wondered why anyone would push themselves that hard at Quidditch. "Please don't tell your brother about that."

"Did I mention he dropped two classes after his first year so he could practice more?" Harry asked cheekily.

"Harry James Potter, I forbid you to tell your brother that piece of information," Lily said seriously. "Nathan already has it in his head that he's going to play for England someday. He doesn't need to know the lengths your friend is taking to practice Quidditch."

"I won't tell Nathan, Mum," Harry said. His mother was right; Nathan would try to drop a class to play Quidditch more, and from the look on his father's face, his dad had probably considered it when he was at Hogwarts.

"So who are your other friends besides Viktor?" Lily asked, clearly trying to move the discussion away from Harry's Quidditch-obsessed friend.

"Well, there's Calypso. She's the one who helped me with my Dark Arts project," Harry said as he tried to figure just what was safe to mention about his friend.

"Is she older as well?" Lily asked, slightly concerned that Harry's friends might not be near his age. She didn't want her son growing up faster than he had to, and having older friends would expose him to things he might not be ready for.

"No, she's a first year like me," Harry said, "but she's really smart and an amazing dueler. I haven't been able to beat her yet."

"Really?" Lily asked, surprised. "Even with all that you know from Charms and Transfiguration? I would have thought you would have been the top dueler in your class."

Harry was about to reply that he was the best dueler in his class, until he realized that he really didn't want his parents to ask what Dark Arts class Calypso was in. "She's smart," he said instead. "She took the test to skip her second year of Charms and Transfiguration at the end of the year."

"Oh yes," said Lily, "I remember you wrote once telling me about that."

"Well she certainly sounds like a nice young lady," James said. "Who else do you hang out with?"

"Well, besides Viktor and Calypso, I guess Kira, but she's not really a friend." Harry resisted the urge to snort at that understatement.

"She's Viktor's girlfriend and sometimes she comes around. She's alright, but I don't really like her that much. Viktor tells me she's really good at spell creation. When I was having problems in that class, he told me to talk to her, but I didn't. I wanted to see if I could do it on my own," Harry lied, not wanting to say that Kira had told him she had better things to do –"Like going to visit the Isle of Drear and sticking my head inside a Quadapod's mouth"—than help him after he asked her a question during breakfast.

"Well, I'm glad you've got some good friends, Harry," Lily said happily.

"Me too. I do have one question though," James said seriously.

Harry hoped he wasn't going to ask anything else about Calypso, but to his relief his father just asked, "Where is Durmstrang?"

Laughing, Harry said, "Siberia, Dad. Nathan figured that out ages ago."

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Midnight Mayhem

Living Room, Godric's Hollow, June 5th

This was it. Only two more spells and his receptacle would be finished. Harry meticulously began the next intricate wand movement, tapping his wand to the quill every so often, causing magical sparks to shoot off of the pulsating object. The amount of magic coming off the quill was palpable, and Harry felt oddly comforted being around so much of his own magic. After a perfect clockwise twirl, Harry pointed his wand at the quill and said, "Liy—"

"LILY, JAMES! ARE YOU THERE?"

"No," Harry practically screamed as his focus was distracted by Professor McGonagall's loud Scottish brogue coming from the floo. Frantically, Harry tried to salvage what work he had done, and he began trying to cancel the last spell.

This was why creating a receptacle was so difficult. If you messed up, even one step, it began a cascading reaction, which canceled out every spell on the object unless you could somehow undo the last spell you cast. Unfortunately, the further you are in finishing a receptacle, the faster the spells are undone, and they gain speed with each spell that is removed. Harry watched as spell after spell left the quill, accompanied by a bright flash of magic. The reactions eventually began unwinding so fast that the quill looked to be permanently glowing. A moment later, it erupted in flames as the collapsing magical reaction became too much for the object to handle.

Groaning in frustration, Harry stood up and walked over the floo. "Hello, Professor," he said somewhat coldly. Honestly, who would call at half-past midnight? The only reason he was still up was because he wanted to finish his project.

"Mr. Potter?" McGonagall asked in surprise before recovering her composure. "Harry, I need you to get your parents immediately. A situation has arisen with your brother at Hogwarts."

"Is Nathan alright?" Harry asked, his anger at being interrupted vanishing.

"He's in the hospital wing, and Madam Pomfrey is doing everything that she can at the moment. Please, Harry, I need to speak with your parents," McGonagall said in deadly serious tone that allowed no arguments.

Harry quickly stood up and ran to his parents bedroom. After banging on the door for about a minute, his father came out looking less than pleased. "Harry, what in Merlin's name is it? It's past midnight!"

"Dad, Professor McGonagall is on the floo, she says something happened to Nathan at Hogwarts," Harry said worriedly.

James' face paled. He closed the door, and Harry could hear muffled voices coming from inside his parents' bedroom. Soon enough, his mother and father opened the door, both of them looked decidedly worried.

"Minerva's on the floo?" Lily asked, already heading down the stairs.

"Yes," Harry said.

Lily raced into the living room, giving only the slightest glance at the burnt spot on their mahogany table, before kneeling down, and sticking her head in the floo. After a few minutes, she took her head out and said, "Harry go to bed. Your father and I need to go to Hogwarts."

"What!" exclaimed Harry. "I want to make sure Nathan is alright."

"No!" Lily snapped. "Go to bed, and I'll ignore what you were doing down here tonight," she said, gesturing to the nasty looking black scorch mark on the table.

"But what about Nath—"

"Harry, go to bed. We'll tell you about it tomorrow," James said seriously.

"But—"

"Now!" Lily and James demanded.

"Fine," Harry said unhappily.

He had made it halfway up the stairs when he heard the sound of the floo activating twice, signaling that his parents had left for Hogwarts. It was going to be a long night, and there was no way he would be able to sleep wondering what happened to his brother. Sighing, Harry entered his room and took out another quill. If he wasn't going to be able to sleep, he might as well try to make a receptacle again, at least that might be able to take his mind off his brother for a little while.

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Placing Blame

Hogwarts Hospital Wing, June 8th

Three days! It had taken three days for Harry to get permission to visit Nathan in the hospital wing at Hogwarts. Three days of his parents trying to avoid telling him what happened to Nathan. Hearing his parents say "Your brother will be fine" and "Don't worry" did not stop him from worrying at all. The fact that they wouldn't tell him what had happened only made Harry worry more.

The reason Harry hadn't seen Nathan yet was because Dumbledore apparently needed to get the permission of the Board of Governors to let a Durmstrang student visit Hogwarts. According to his mother, Durmstrang had a nasty reputation of stealing the secrets of other magical academies during the late 1500s by sending younger students to 'visit' their relatives at other magical academies. Due to Durmstrang's less-than-stellar reputation, Hogwarts and many other schools responded by making it very difficult for Durmstrang students to enter the grounds.

Stepping through the floo in the traditional blood-red robes of Durmstrang, Harry appeared in the Hogwarts hospital wing.

"Right this way, Mr. Potter," Madam Pomfrey said immediately. Harry nodded his head in appreciation at the lack of small talk. Clearly someone understood that he just wanted to see his brother.

Madam Pomfrey led Harry to the far side of the infirmary where a single bed was closed off in curtains. All around the bed were chocolates, flowers, get well cards, and...a pair of toilet seats? Shaking his head, Harry ignored the bizarre get well gift and allowed Madam Pomfrey to guide him past the curtain to see his brother. Harry was shocked at how pale his brother looked as he lay immobile in the bed.

After a few minutes of staring at his unmoving brother, Harry wiped away a few stray tears and asked, "What happened?"

"Your brother was suffering from lacerations from an overzealous incarcerous spell as well as possessing a few painful bruises, cuts, and burns," Madam Pomfrey explained.

"Why would he need to be in the hospital for three days for burns and cuts?" Harry demanded. "Can't you regrow bones in a matter of hours? Merlin, it shouldn't take more than a few days to regrow and internal organ if you have the right potions on hand. What else happened to him? And why is he unconscious?"

Slightly startled by the young boy's knowledge of medicinal practices, Madam Pomfrey looked distinctly uncomfortable. "Your brother was hit with a dark curse. Fortunately the headmaster arrived in time to intervene, but your parents, the headmaster, and I were in agreement that it was best to give your brother a long term sleep potion so that he would not be in pain when he awoke."

Harry gave the matron a confused look. "Why couldn't you just give him a pain relief potion?"

Turning away from the young boy, Madam Pomfrey said, "I'm afraid I am not allowed to discuss any more of Mr. Potter's condition."

"Then tell me what happened?" Harry pressed angrily. "What caused this!"

"I'm not at liberty to say, Mr. Potter," Madam Pomfrey said, sounding somewhat apologetic. Seeing the anger on Harry's face increasing, Madam Pomfrey said, "While your parents and the Headmaster don't wish for any staff member to worry you, I will say that Mr. Weasley and Ms. Granger might be able to give you an idea as to what happened to your brother. I understand that they were both with him that night. It's almost noon, so it would be safe to assume that they would be in the Great Hall having lunch right now."

Harry gave the matron a nod and turned to leave. Before he reached the curtain though, Madam Pomfrey said, "Mr. Potter, you didn't hear that from me, understood?"

Pausing, Harry turned to face Madam Pomfrey. "Hear what, Ma'am? I'm sorry if I didn't catch what you said, but I'm fairly hungry. I think I'll grab a quick bite for lunch."

After making it from the hospital wing to the Great Hall in record time, Harry entered the Great Hall and zeroed in on the Gryffindor table, looking for Ron and Hermione. He found them on the far side of the table, sitting close to the staff table. As Harry began to walk towards his brother's friends, he drew the attention of the Hogwarts population. As he passed the Slytherin table, he saw several students' eyes widen, and he definitely heard them mutter about Durmstrang.

As he passed the staff table, he saw Professor Flitwick look at him with a dejected expression on his face while Professor Snape seemed to be observing him carefully. Harry was just glad his parents, Professor McGonagall, and the headmaster were all in a meeting to discuss Nathan's health. Had they seen the way he was looking at Ron and Hermione, they would have dragged him out of the hall as quickly as possible.

"Weasley, Granger, explain now!" Harry snarled, causing most of the conversation around the Great Hall to stop immediately.

Hermione's head jerked up at the sound of his angry voice, and she seemed incredibly surprised to see him standing in front of her. Ron, on the other hand, simply turned around and looked at his Durmstrang robes in disgust.

Knowing that he didn't have very long before the headmaster or his parents showed up, Harry walked right into Ron's personal space and hissed, "What happened to my brother?" Harry's wand spat out angry looking yellow and violet sparks, and Ron suddenly looked decidedly uncomfortable.

"It was Quirrell," Hermione began rambling. "He tried to steal the Philosopher's Stone. Ron, Nathan, and I went to stop him. Ron was hurt by McGonagall's giant chess set, and there was only enough potion left for either Nathan or me to pass through an enchanted fire. Nathan told me to go back to help Ron, I-I..."

Harry felt himself stagger back a step, and he looked at Hermione with a mixture of shock and disbelief. Glancing up at the staff table, Harry confirmed that Quirrell was indeed missing, but it didn't make sense. Why would Quirrell, the closest thing he had to a friend at

Hogwarts, try to kill his brother! There had to be more to the story. Doing his best to ignore what he had been told about Quirrell until he could talk to someone else, Harry turned to Granger and said, "I thought I told you to leave the stone alone! It was Professor Dumbledore's job to protect the stone, not a group of first years."

"Dumbledore was gone! We had to do something," Ron said loudly. "No one would listen to us when we told them the stone was in danger!"

"This is your fault, isn't it!" Harry snapped, momentarily losing control and shoving his wand under Ron's neck, causing the other Weasleys at the Gryffindor table to stand up and point their wands at him. Unconcerned, Harry growled out, "My brother and Granger have more common sense than to do something this monumentally stupid! You on the other hand don't have an intelligent bone in your body!"

"You tell him, Potter," Draco Malfoy shouted from over at the Slytherin table.

As the Slytherin table roared with laughter, Professor Flitwick stood up. "Mr. Potter, release Mr. Weasley at once!"

Reluctantly, Harry complied and Ron quickly ran around to the other side of the table to stand by Hermione.

"So those are your new friends? A bunch of stinking Slytherins? I bet you fit right in with all of them since you're learning the Dark Arts at Durmstrang!" Ron accused.

Lowering his voice, Harry whispered so that only Ron and Hermione could hear him. "I am learning the Dark Arts, Weasley. So you had better watch your mouth around me. Merlin knows you won't be able to stop me if I decided to curse you."

Harry couldn't help but appreciate watching Ron pale in terror. His enjoyment only lasted a moment, however, when he saw that Flitwick and Snape had left the staff table and were standing not a few feet away from him. From the expression on Flitwick's face, Harry's old Head of House had heard every word he had just said to Ron.

"He just threatened me!" Ron said frantically to the professors.

Before Flitwick could say anything, Professor Snape addressed Ron directly. "Mr. Potter no longer goes to school here, Weasley. What would you like for us to do? Take twenty points from Durmstrang?" As most of the Slytherins chuckled, Snape slowly came to stand next to Harry. "Perhaps it would be best if I escorted you out of the Great Hall, Mr. Potter. You seem to be disturbing lunch."

With one final hate-filled glare at Ron, Harry allowed Professor Snape to escort him out of the Great Hall. As he passed the Ravenclaw table, Harry couldn't help but notice the look of shock on all of his former peers' faces. They clearly didn't know what to make of him anymore, and Harry wanted to scream that they never bothered to get to know him in the first place.

"An interesting performance, Mr. Potter," Professor Snape said as soon as they cleared the doors of the Great Hall.

"I'm right that this is Weasley's fault," Harry said defensively. "Nathan didn't do dumb things before he met Ron."

"Perhaps," Snape conceded, "but have you ever considered that maybe your brother has always been such a dunderhead, and it was only your presence that stopped him from taking such idiotic actions?"

"No," Harry admitted.

Snape smirked. "I think you'll find that your brother has much more in common with Mr. Weasley than you wish to think."

"Nathan is nothing like Ron Weasley," Harry said angrily. "He's intelligent—"

"-lazy, obsessed with Quidditch, and a troublemaker," Snape finished.

"My brother is worth a hundred of Ron," Harry said strongly

"Of that I have no doubt. However, that is simply due to the fact that Weasley is that bad, not that your brother is in any way decent," Snape replied without any hesitation.

Not wanting to address Snape's claim, Harry couldn't help but ask, "Is it true? That Quirrell attacked Nathan?"

"Yes," Snape replied. "Your brother foolishly sought out a confrontation with Quirrell while he was attempting to steal the Philosopher's Stone."

"But why would Quirrell try to steal the stone?" Harry asked. That was the part he didn't understand. Quirrell was helping to protect the stone, why would he want to steal it?

Snape took a moment to consider his words before he said, "All the gold you could desire and eternal life is enough to tempt any man. The fact that Quirrell was aware of what the other protections guarding the stone were perhaps made it too tempting an opportunity to pass up. Your brother simply got in his way, and he was very fortunate Dumbledore returned when he did."

"What spell was it?" Harry asked. "Madam Pomfrey said Nathan was hit by a dark curse. What was it?"

"I had a chance to look at your spell chain, Mr. Potter, and I admit I'm rather intrigued by some of the spells you selected," Snape replied.

Scowling slightly at Snape's shameless topic change, Harry somewhat bitterly asked, "Why's that sir?"

"You started the chain as I expected, choosing simple hexes and basic elemental spells that flowed well together," Snape said.

"But?" Harry prodded.

"But then you began alternating between cutting and blasting spells in increasing levels of difficulty to close out the chain."

"So?" Harry asked. "Cutting spells typically end on a slashing motion and blasting spells tend to start with a twirl or twist. The momentum of the slash makes going into either motion very easy and it flows perfectly."

"I once knew someone who had a spell chain that was very similar to yours, Mr. Potter," Snape said slowly. "It was obviously much more impressive and filled with dueling-caliber spells, but they also ended on a series of cutting and blasting spells."

"I can't imagine it's all that rare," Harry pointed out, not understanding his old professor's point. "The spells do go together easily."

"No, that is not rare at all, Mr. Potter, but what is unusual is that you continued to increase the complexity of your curses as the chain drew to a close. Most people like to have a balanced chain so that they don't overexert themselves at any point. By increasing the difficulty of your spells, you allow yourself a smaller margin for error that many would find too risky while in a duel. In fact, I could count on one hand the number of people actually capable of maintaining such a tactic when it is applied to the highest level of dueling," Snape said as they arrived outside of the hospital wing.

"What are you trying to say, sir?" Harry asked, curious as to what his old professor's point was.

"Nothing really," Snape said as he stared intently at Harry. "I just found it a rather strange that you would choose such a method."

As Snape turned to leave, Harry had a horrible thought. Calypso had helped him make that chain. Did Snape somehow know he had help creating it? "Your friend?" Harry asked nervously. "The one who used a chain similar to mine. Who is he sir?"

Snape paused. "I never said it was a he, Mr. Potter, and I don't believe I mentioned that we were friend either."

"Oh," Harry said, not sure what to make of the Head of Slytherin House's final comment. His mother said that Professor Snape liked to talk between the lines, but if he was trying to tell Harry something,

that was just down right cryptic. Shrugging, Harry walked into the hospital wing, and immediately saw his parents and Professor McGonagall waiting for him. Neither of them looked at all pleased.

"Mr. Potter! Explain why you took it upon yourself to threaten Mr. Weasley in the Great Hall?" McGonagall demanded a split second before his mother could.

Shaking his head, Harry cursed the day he and his brother met Ron Weasley.

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We Lie Because We Love

Hogwarts Hospital Wing, June 8th

"Welcome back, Mr. Potter."

With a muffled groan, Nathan slowly opened his eyes to see the Headmaster sitting on the edge of his bed with a bright smile on his face. All around him were assorted pieces of candy, get well cards, and even flowers. He abruptly noted that he was in the hospital wing. Slowly, the memory of what happened came back to him, and he immediately sat upright. "Sir, the stone! It was Professor Quirrell and...and You-Know-Who, sir!" Nathan said frantically.

"Relax, my boy, please, or else Poppy will have me thrown out," Dumbledore said soothingly. "Do not fear, Quirrell did not manage to get the stone from you. I arrived in time to prevent him from taking it. Though, when I saw the state you were in, I feared the worst."

"You were almost too late, sir, I couldn't have held Quirrell off for much longer," Nathan replied as the memory of Voldemort's face in the back of Quirrell's head crept into his mind.

"Oh my dear boy, no. I was not concerned for the stone, but for you. When I arrived you..." Dumbledore trailed off as a haunted look spread across his face. "Well I feared the worst."

Several tears fell down Nathan's face and he hung his head. "I-I couldn't let him have the stone, sir. Not when it was him trying to come back to life."

Dumbledore placed his hand on Nathan's shoulder, causing the boy to look up. "A true Gryffindor to your very core Nathan."

"Did you stop him, sir? Is You-Know-Who gone now?" Nathan asked hopefully.

"Call him Voldemort, Nathan," Dumbledore said strongly. "Fear of a name simply increases fear of the person. And, unfortunately, no. When I arrived, I dispatched Quirrell and Voldemort fled. Left with the options of chasing down a specter that I may or may not be able to harm or getting you medical aid, I made the only decision I could have lived with myself making, and I rushed you to the hospital wing. So, yes, while Voldemort is still alive, though, I hesitate to call him that, he is less than a shadow, incapable of affecting the physical plane of existence without possessing another being."

"Will he be able to return, sir?" Nathan asked hesitantly. "Couldn't he just try again?"

Dumbledore removed his glasses and looked deeply troubled. "There are ways, Nathan, yes, but you prevented him from succeeding this time, and should we continue to prevent him, Voldemort might never be able to return."

Trying not to think about Voldemort returning to power, Nathan asked, "What happened to the stone, sir?"

"After speaking with its rightful owner, it has been decided that the stone needs to be destroyed in order to keep Voldemort from ever attempting to gain its power ever again," Dumbledore said solemnly.

"But doesn't that mean your friend, Mr. Flamel, will die?" Nathan asked aghast.

"You know about Nicholas?" Dumbledore asked in surprise. "My, you did go about this properly, didn't you? Yes, Nathan, Nicholas and his

wife will die, but while that might seem incomprehensible to one as young as you. For Nicholas and Perenelle, it is merely like going to sleep after a very long day. Now, enough talk about such grim topics. I must alert your parents that you have awakened. I'm sure that your brother will be very pleased to hear of your recovery."

"Harry knows about what happened?" Nathan asked, dreading the answer.

"Yes. I understand he was less than pleased to find out what happened to you. Your brother was here yesterday, and he had a rather loud confrontation with Mr. Weasley in the Great Hall. He seemed to be of the belief that it was somehow young Mr. Weasley's fault that you went after the stone. There was a bit of a confrontation, and I'm afraid I've had to temporarily ban Harry from Hogwarts. After all, I cannot have a student from another magical school threatening to curse one of my students."

Nathan's eyes widened. "Harry threatened to curse Ron?"

"Do not judge your brother too harshly, Nathan. He was, understandably, distressed at the time, and I confess, I played a small role part in furthering his ire. I foolishly sought to abate your brother's fears by telling Poppy to only inform him of the superficial nature of your injuries. The last thing I wanted to do was to tell Harry that you had been severely injured by a man possessed by Lord Voldemort. Unfortunately, in my haste to protect Harry from the truth, I overlooked something very important."

"What sir?" Nathan asked curiously.

"That your brother is an incredibly intelligent young man," Dumbledore replied. "Harry quickly called Poppy out for not telling him the whole truth, and when she revealed that she was unable to tell him much more information, he went about the castle looking for Mr. Weasley and Ms. Granger. The story about what happened between you and Professor Quirrell has made its rounds among the student population, though the true nature of who was behind the deed is not. As you can tell by the number of get well tokens, it was not difficult for Harry to deduce what happened. Do not worry on it,

Nathan. I'm sure it was simply out of fear for your condition that led your brother to such actions. Harry cares a great deal about you."

"He told me not to go after the stone," Nathan admitted.

"And yet, had you not, there is a chance Quirrell would have solved the mystery of the Mirror of Erised and Voldemort would have returned to power," Dumbledore said gravely.

"So I did the right thing?" Nathan asked hopefully.

"In life, Nathan, there are very few times when there is a definitive right or wrong," Dumbledore said wistfully. "All that we can truly control is whether we are good or evil. Your actions in regard to the stone were firmly on the side of good, and, therefore, I believe you did right, my boy. Your brother might not understand why you put yourself at such a risk, but someday he will realize that it is often harder to do what one considers right than to do what is easy."

Nathan nodded his head, pleased that Dumbledore believed he did the right thing. "Thank you, sir."

"You are welcome, my boy," Dumbledore said kindly before looking sadly at the boy in front of him. "I was going to wait to ask this of you when your parents arrived Nathan, but I suppose it would be best if I simply do so now."

"Sir?"

"Outside of a few trusted individuals, you, your parents, and I are the only people who know Voldemort is still alive, and, after speaking with your parents, we believe it would be in your brother's best interest to not know of Voldemort's role in this ordeal."

"What?" Nathan asked in shock. "Why?"

Dumbledore turned away from Nathan and gazed out of a nearby window. At first Nathan thought Dumbledore wasn't going to answer him, but, after a moment, Dumbledore quietly said, "There are few times when I have been utterly fooled in my life Nathan, but

Voldemort succeeded in doing so this year. The fact that he was able to possess one of my teachers for most of the year..."

"It wasn't your fault sir," Nathan said adamantly, "Everyone thought he was dead, and we stopped him! He didn't get the stone."

"Yes Nathan, we did indeed stop him from achieving his goal, but Quirrell did a lot more than just plot to capture the stone." Dumbledore looked particularly pained as he turned back to Nathan. "Among my many foolish actions this year, I count not reaching out to your brother as among the most severe. While I felt it was my duty as a Headmaster to keep my distance from you and Harry this year, I should have recognized the problems your brother was having. Had I known or perhaps seen the level of magic he commanded, maybe it would have stopped Harry from going to Quirrell for help."

Nathan looked at Dumbledore in shock. "Sir," he said hesitantly, "what do you mean he went to Quirrell for help?"

"After I defeated Quirrell, I asked Professors Snape and McGonagall to search his quarters for anything that might reveal information about Voldemort to us. Inside of a journal, Severus found several entries relating to the personal tutoring he gave to Harry in the Fall. It seems after numerous professors refused to give advanced lessons to your brother, Quirrell stumbled upon Harry practicing by himself in an unused class room. While we are not certain of his motivations, Quirrell began periodically tutoring Harry in various fields of magic."

With a look of dread on his face, Nathan asked, "Do you mean Harry was being trained b-by Voldemort?"

"We don't know Nathan." Dumbledore said rubbing his temple tiredly. "It is possible that Voldemort only possessed Quirrell after the Christmas holiday for failing to capture the stone in the fall; however, I doubt we will ever be certain."

"Is that why Harry wanted to transfer?" Nathan suddenly asked hopefully. "Did Quirrell put a spell on him? Can he come back to Hogwarts?"

"No," Dumbledore said emphatically, causing Nathan's hopeful expression to falter, "I would have sensed any overt magical influences on your brother when we discussed the situation at Christmas, and your mother has already informed me that she could find no lingering passive magic that might have been used on him. Furthermore, according to your parents, Harry has been nothing but happy about his experience at Durmstrang. He has built several friendships and has expressed nothing but his enjoyment with the school."

With a confused look on his face, Nathan said, "I still don't understand why we shouldn't tell Harry the truth."

"Nathan," Dumbledore sighed, "the truth is a wonderful, yet dangerous thing. Your brother is already dealing with the fact that one of the few people he was close to at Hogwarts nearly killed you. Your parents and I agree that Harry does not need to know he was likely manipulated in some manner by Lord Voldemort. It would only serve to increase the guilt he already feels. So, I ask you again Nathan, please do not tell your brother about Voldemort."

"I still think Harry deserves to know, sir," Nathan said solemnly, "but I won't tell him."

"Thank you Nathan. Now, I had best alert your parents that you have awakened."

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Homecoming Part Two

King's Cross, London, June 20th

"Why does Hogwarts make its students stay at the school for an entire week after the exams are over?" Harry asked.

"It's a time to decompress and say goodbye to your friends," James explained.

"But they lose a week of summer vacation," Harry pointed out.

"Well they also don't release the students until they have the exam results for the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 6th years finished," Lily added.

Harry looked at his mother in disbelief. "So they force the students to stay an extra week just because they want to tell them how they did before summer vacation?"

"Well, I, for one, like it," Mr. Granger said. "I know Hermione would have been pacing the floor waiting for her exam results. This way she can actually relax a little."

"I suppose the waiting is a bit nerve racking," Harry admitted.

"You still don't have your scores? Haven't you been finished for almost a month now, Harry?" Mrs. Granger asked.

"Yes, but Durmstrang has more students than Hogwarts, and often the professors have a difficult time deciding who should be considered the top in each class." Harry explained.

"Your mother told us how your school's scoring system differed from Hogwarts. Which do you prefer?" Mr. Granger asked.

"Durmstrang, definitely," Harry said certainly. "The professors don't worry about keeping a struggling student afloat. If they can't keep up, they don't advance and slow the rest of the class down."

"That's rather cruel to the students who aren't as gifted," Mrs. Granger said disapprovingly.

"Then they shouldn't go to Durmstrang," Harry said sounding unconcerned. "Odds are they know what the system is like, and their parents chose to enroll them there. They could have easily sent their kids to Beuxbatons or one of the lesser known magical academies."

"I suppose when the students and parents know what they are getting into from the start, it is sort of hard to argue," Mr. Granger said as the Hogwarts express pulled up.

"Oh heavens, we aren't late, are we?" Mrs. Weasley asked bustling over with Mr. Weasley and Ginny.

"No, Molly, the train arrived just a moment ago," Lily said.

"Oh, thank Merlin. Arthur was tinkering in his tool shed again, and I didn't notice the time," Molly said, shaking her head in exasperation.

Mr. Weasley immediately walked over to Dan Granger. "Dan, it's good to see you again! Tell me, what is the purpose of a rubber duck?"

As Mr. Weasley began asking the Grangers various questions about his latest Muggle obsession, Harry saw the express doors open and several students start to exit. Turning to his father, Harry asked, "See him yet?"

"No, but that's not a surprise." James chuckled. "Knowing your brother, he's probably going to be the last one off the train."

The first of the Weasleys to arrive was Percy. The prefect looked disdainfully at Harry when he saw him, and Harry rolled his eyes at the over serious boy. The twins, Fred and George, arrived next. They both subtly attempted to jinx Harry's shoelaces to tie themselves together, but Harry caught on and easily reversed it. He made a note to curse the twins at some point in the future for trying to humiliate him in public.

Finally, Nathan, Hermione, and Ron got off the express along with Neville Longbottom, who looked like he was having a difficult time controlling his toad. Harry saw Neville splinter off and go towards an imposing woman wearing a large vulture hat while Ron, Hermione, and Nathan made their way over.

Harry was amused to see Ron glare at him when the boy saw him. Harry wanted nothing more than to mock the redhead, but his parents had strictly forbidden him from arguing with Ron if he wanted to greet his brother on the platform. Not that Harry would pick a fight surrounded by all of Ron's brothers, he might be at Durmstrang now,

but he was still a Ravenclaw, and he certainly had better sense than to do something that stupid.

"Potter," Ron said icily.

Harry simply ignored the cold greeting. Ron Weasley was hardly worth responding to anyway. Instead he greeted his brother with a smile and said, "Well you're looking better than the last time I saw you."

Nathan looked uneasily between Ron and his brother for a moment. "Well, yeah, you know, Hospital Wing and all."

Harry could see how tense his brother was. Clearly, Ron had gotten to Nathan and told him all sorts of exaggerated stories about how Harry had threatened to kill him with Dark Magic or some such rubbish. He'd have to set the record straight with his brother when they got home. He wouldn't have Ron Weasley causing a rift between him and his brother.

"So, how was Siberia?" Nathan asked, letting a smile cross his face for the first time.

Harry smirked. "Cold, dreadfully cold."

"Oh, there is no way that you go to school in Siberia," Hermione said exasperatedly.

"How do you know?" Harry challenged.

"Because it's not possible," she argued right back.

"Would you have said magic was possible two years ago?" Harry asked curiously.

Hermione looked ready to explode with facts proving her point when her father patted her on the shoulder and said, "He's teasing you, dear. Trust me, let it go. Now say goodbye to your friends, we really have to be off."

Harry watched impassively as Hermione hugged both Ron and Nathan before emphatically making them promise to write her. Eventually, Mrs. Granger managed to pull the girl away after telling her that she and Lily had already spoken about getting together over the summer.

With the Grangers gone, Harry immediately asked, "Are we ready to go?"

"I think so," Lily said. "Nathan, say goodbye to Ron. We have to be off."

Soon enough, Harry saw his brother step away from Ron and make his way over towards the rest of his family. When he arrived, James offered them all the Portkey. Together, the Potters all grabbed a piece of the small bit of spare parchment. A moment later they were gone.

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A Necessary Revelation

Living Room, Godric's Hollow, July 13th

After nearly three weeks, Harry had decided to give up. There was no reason, other than sheer greed, that Harry could think of for Quirrell to attempt to steal the Philosopher's stone. Harry could even understand why Quirrell would succumb to the temptation. The thought of eternal life and all the money you could ever desire was incredibly desirable, even to an eleven year old. No, if Quirrell was just going to steal the Philosopher's Stone, Harry could, and would, have understood. But Harry would never understand why Quirrell would want to kill Nathan. The only possible conclusion Harry had drawn is that Quirrell had been surprised by Nathan, and had assumed it was a professor who was about to catch him. Why else would he send a dark curse at his brother when a memory charm would work just as well to cover his escape.

Harry would always appreciate all that his former professor had done for him, but he would never be able to forgive the man for trying to kill

his brother. Since it was now near impossible for Harry to think about Quirrell without at least a dozen conflicting emotions, he did the only thing he could; he vowed not to think about the man. As far as Harry was concerned, nothing important happened during his first term at Hogwarts. His education had begun at Durmstrang, Hogwarts was irrelevant.

Just as Harry thought of Durmstrang, a magnificent great horned owl landed outside Harry's window, displaying a letter with the Durmstrang crest. Harry quickly opened his window, and the owl fluttered inside. Once the letter was removed, the owl turned and flew back outside.

Harry hesitated before taking a deep breath and opening the letter.

Dear Mr. Potter,

Congratulations, your academic scores for your first year have been judged, and you will be allowed to continue your education at the Durmstrang Institute of Magic.

Please note that classes begin on the 26th of August. This letter will function as a Portkey to take you to Durmstrang; however, it will only be active between the 20th to the 25th of August. Should these dates prove problematic for you, please contact us no later than the 31st of July. Activation word is 'Minsk.'

Sincerely,

Demetri Überzeug

Assistant to the Highmaster

Harry quickly flipped to the next page of the letter and glanced at his scores. With a whoop of excitement, Harry raced out of his room and went downstairs. Spotting his mother reading a potions magazine on the couch, Harry excitedly said, "Mum, my grades from Durmstrang arrived!"

Lily looked up and put her magazine to the side. "Oh, good. Let me see how you did Harry."

Harry immediately handed over his score card.

Charms: M

Dark Arts: J

Herbology J

History of Magic: J

Potions: J

Spell Creation: J

Transfiguration: J

Mr. Potter you have passed all of your classes, and you have been cleared to take Fourth Year Charms and Transfiguration, Third Year Dark Arts, Herbology, History of Magic, and Potions, and Second Year Spell Creation.

"Harry, why does this say you're going to be going into your third year Dark Arts class?" Lily asked cautiously.

"Oh, um, well, that's because I am," Harry admitted. "I tested out of second year Dark Arts."

Lily looked at her son, concern evident in her eyes. "I think you need to get your father, Harry. He's outside playing Quidditch with Nathan and your uncle Sirius."

"Mum, it's not that big of a deal, really," Harry said, trying to placate his mother.

"Harry, go get your father. We need to discuss this," Lily said seriously.

With a sigh, Harry left the living room, and went outside where three small Quidditch hoops were in place. He saw his uncle Sirius playing keeper as his father and Nathan took shots on him with the Quaffle.

"Dad, Mum sent me out here to get you!" Harry called out to his father, who quickly flew down and dismounted his broomstick.

"Did she say what it was about?" asked James.

"Yes," Harry said uncomfortably.

James grinned slightly. "Well, are you going to tell me before we go inside?"

"It's about my grades from Durmstrang," Harry said, trying to be as vague as possible. It had taken a while for Harry to convince Nathan that Ron had exaggerated the threat he made in the Great Hall, and Harry really didn't need Nathan overhearing that he was actually jumping a year in the Dark Arts.

Entering the house, Harry led his father into the living room where his mother was waiting.

"What's this about, Lily?" James asked curiously. "Harry said it had something to do with his grades?"

"Read that," Lily said handing him Harry's scorecard.

James scanned the document quickly and smiled. "Congratulations, Harry, this is a tremendous scorecard. First in your class in third year Charms!"

"James, it's not Harry's scores I'm concerned about. Read what classes he is eligible to take next year." Lily said pointing at the bottom of the page.

Doing as his wife instructed, James made it to the second line before he asked, "Third year Dark Arts? Why aren't you going to be in your second year?"

"I tested out of it," Harry answered.

James looked initially perplexed at the idea of his son wanting to jump a year in the Dark Arts before a dark and slightly nervous look crossed his face. He turned to look at Lily, who nodded her head slightly, showing that she feared the same thing as her husband.

When Lily and James were first told that Harry was receiving personal, private, tutoring from the man possibly possessed by Lord Voldemort, they had promptly panicked. It had taken a series of powerful calming charms from Dumbledore to get the two concerned parents to calm down, and, fortunately, between Dumbledore, Lily, and James, they were able to discern that Quirrell had not cast any lasting or passive magic on Harry. Still, Harry showing a sudden interest in dark magic was something that set off alarm bells for both Lily and James. Regardless of Dumbledore's assurances that Harry had not shown any signs of mental manipulation by Voldemort or Quirrell, the thought of the dark lord implanting a subtle command into their son with mind magic terrified them.

Hesitantly, James turned to his son and asked, "Harry, be honest, why did you want to skip a year in the dark arts?"

"How would you feel if some random first year suddenly showed up halfway through the year and became one of the best students in third year Charms and Transfiguration?" Harry asked

"I'd probably be a little jealous," James said slowly. "Are you saying that some of the older kids didn't treat you well?"

"A few cornered me after a Transfiguration class once," Harry admitted, "but Viktor showed up and they left me alone."

"What do you mean they cornered you?" Lily demanded, suddenly nervous for her son's safety at Durmstrang.

Shuffling uncomfortably Harry said, "They were upset that Professor Rosemburg seemed to favor me. If Viktor hadn't shown up when he did, they probably would have cursed me."

James scowled. "Why didn't you mention this before?"

"What would you and Mum have done if I told you, Dad? You barely let me go to Durmstrang at all. If I had written a few weeks into the school year that some older students were threatening me, you would have put me back into Hogwarts," Harry argued.

"Harry, we want to know what is happening to you. You could have been seriously hurt. Did these boys threaten you again?" Lily asked fearfully.

"Who threatened you?" Nathan asked as he and Sirius entered the living room looking concerned.

"Just some older students at Durmstrang," Harry said hesitantly.

"What! Why?" Nathan asked immediately.

"They didn't think that a first year should make a bunch of second and third years look bad in class," Harry said honestly.

"So they cursed you!" Sirius said angrily. "I hope you got them back."

"They didn't curse me. My friend showed up and stopped them before they could," Harry explained. "Still, I knew that I got lucky and that Viktor wouldn't always be around to help me. If the older kids in the class really wanted to curse me, they would have eventually been able to."

"So that's why you started learning more curses? To defend yourself?" James asked, not liking what his son had been forced to do.

Harry nodded. "Calypso asked me to help her test out of second year Charms and Transfiguration, and I asked her to help me skip second year Dark Arts. I didn't want to get cornered by a bunch of older students and not be able to defend myself."

"So...you must have learned a lot of dark spells to skip an entire year," Nathan said hesitantly.

"Merlin! Durmstrang isn't nearly as bad as everyone says it is," Harry ranted. "My first year Dark Arts class was very similar to Hogwarts, except that some students were chosen to duel at the end of every class. It's not like the professors are trying to turn us all into a bunch of miniature Death Eaters or future Dark Lords."

"Harry, typically reputations as well established as Durmstrang's have a legitimate reason behind it," Lily pointed out. "Your first few years might not include a lot about the Dark Arts, but what about as you advance? The class is called the Dark Arts, Harry, not Defense Against the Dark Arts. Even you must admit that eventually they will likely start teaching you some questionable magic. Your father and I abhor the Dark Arts, and I don't like the thought of you pushing yourself towards learning them."

"So, I should just let myself get cursed?" Harry asked sarcastically.

"Harry, don't put words in my mouth," Lily said sternly. "You could have simply read ahead and learned some spells to defend yourself. You didn't have to test out of your second year class."

"But that wouldn't help me," Harry argued.

"Why not?" asked Sirius.

"I needed to let the older kids know that I'm not someone they can just push around or contemplate cursing on a whim," Harry said stubbornly.

Lily looked skeptical. "Harry, I don't think a fifth year is going to care all that much about whether you're in your second or third year class. They would still know far more magic than you."

"Well, you're right, Mum," Harry admitted, "but the only older kids I needed to worry about are the second, third, and fourth years. There were a few fifth years who didn't like me, but most the fifth, sixth, and seventh year students don't even bother to notice the younger students. Calypso says they are typically too busy working on long-term projects or concerned about other older students to be bothered

with a first, second, or third year. So you see, skipping a year in the Dark Arts, actually helps me sends a message to the second, third, and fourth years that I'm not someone that they should mess with."

"Harry are you saying you skipped a year just to intimidate the other students at Durmstrang?" James asked disapprovingly.

"Well, as soon as they heard what I was planning on doing, I wasn't bothered again." Harry said, defending his actions.

"Did you really feel that was necessary, Harry?" Lily asked. "Were you that concerned about the kids in your class trying to hurt you?"

Harry knew that he had to give a good response, but it wasn't like he could say, 'Oh yeah, Mum, Dad did I forget to mention the day I spent in the hospital wing recovering from a Bone Breaking curse?' Instead he said, "I wasn't that worried about them, but it was still something I thought about, and I didn't want to worry at all about the older kids cursing me. I just wanted to have fun with my friends and learn magic, Mum."

"Well, I think you did the right thing," Sirius said.

"What?" James and Lily asked in surprised.

"Oh come on, James. Imagine you are Harry, and you're in a class filled with a bunch of jealous berks who are envious of your talent. If Harry had just learned spells to defend himself on his own, they would have tried to curse him again, and Harry would have taken them off-guard with some advanced spells. That would have just made them madder, and the next time they attacked him, they would have been ready. By making it known that he was skipping a year in the Dark Arts, Harry made sure everyone knew that attacking him would be a risk. So instead of all the older kids being surprised and mad that they were beat by a first year, Harry made them all wary to attack him in the first place. When you think about it, Harry did what was necessary to avoid a fight," Sirius explained.

James and Lily looked at each other, both their faces showing genuine surprise. "Sirius, that was insightful... are you feeling alright?" James teased.

"I suppose when you put it that way, Sirius, it is hard to argue," Lily admitted. "I just don't like to see you moving too far ahead in the Dark Arts, Harry."

"I understand. I'm not going to try to move ahead in that class anymore," Harry said honestly.

Lily and James shared a look with one another before nodding their heads in acceptance, both desperately hoping their son was being honest with them.

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Proud Parents and The Unexpected Gift

Living Room, Godric's Hollow, July 31st

"So if you don't have a good final project, you can fail a class, and they don't even give you the opportunity to retake it?" Hermione asked, aghast.

"Sometimes you're given the opportunity to retake a class, but it's very rare," Harry responded. It was his and Nathan's birthday, and while the Potters, Remus, and Sirius had a private party for just the family earlier in the day, the Grangers and the Weasleys had been invited for dinner that evening. Nathan was out showing the small Quidditch pitch behind the house to Ron, and Hermione had spent the last twenty minutes grilling Harry about the differences between Hogwarts and Durmstrang.

"And why don't you take Astronomy?" Hermione asked.

"It's an elective you can choose to take at the start of your third year," said Harry, "but Spell Creation is seen as a much more important class at Durmstrang. I personally agree. While Astronomy is useful

for Potions and Herbology, Spell Creation incorporates aspects of Charms, Defense, and Transfiguration."

"Learning how to create your own spells does sound fascinating," Hermione said wistfully. "Do you think I could borrow your book? You'll be getting a new one for next year, right?"

"Sorry, I'm going to hold onto it, Hermione. A friend of mine told me that the book for next year assumes you remember a lot from the first year book, so it doesn't repeat a lot of things. I was late entering the class so I still need to practice memorizing a lot of the reactions and effects different wand movements have on spells. Maybe next year I'll be able to let you borrow it."

Hermione looked annoyed, but she quickly recovered and said, "Your Mother told mine that you managed to create some really impressive object for your Charms class. What was it?"

"I could tell you what it is, or I could show you what it does," Harry said, a grin appearing on his face.

"Show me," Hermione replied immediately.

"Let's get your parents. I think my mum said your parents wanted to see it as well," Harry commented as he and Hermione walked over to where the adults were talking.

"Mum," Hermione said quickly, "Harry is going to show me the project he did to earn him the top spot in Charms at Durmstrang. He said you might want to see it as well?"

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Granger said. "Your mother was very excited when she told me about your project Harry, but I admit I couldn't quite understand the concepts she was talking about."

"What is it you're going to be showing them Harry?" Mrs. Weasley asked curiously.

Harry smirked. "I don't want to ruin the surprise for Hermione."

Surprisingly, Harry didn't mind talking to Hermione. She was smart, and, unlike Ron, she didn't accuse him of being a dark wizard just for going to Durmstrang. She had asked a few questions about the difference between his Dark Arts class and Hogwarts' Defense Against the Dark Arts class, but after that she had simply let the issue slide and asked other questions about his new school.

"Oh, let me get your mother, Harry. I know she'll want to brag about how brilliant her son is. I know Dan and I enjoy telling everyone how Hermione finished first in her year at Hogwarts," Mrs. Granger said, causing Hermione to blush.

"Do your parents really tell their friends about Hogwarts?" Harry asked in alarm.

"What? Oh no, don't worry, they don't actually say Hogwarts." Hermione laughed slightly at the thought of her parents telling their friends about their daughter the witch. "Mum and Dad tell everyone I go to an exclusive boarding school for the gifted in Scotland and that because some of the students are the children of diplomats they can't discuss much about it. Apparently, that is what all Muggles are supposed to say when anyone asks about Hogwarts."

"Harry, I hear you're going to be showing the Grangers your room," Lily said with a smile.

"Your room?" asked Hermione curiously.

"Just wait until you see it," James said joining the group and standing next to his wife, "I couldn't believe he was able to do it."

"What did he do, James?" Arthur asked.

"Why don't we let Harry show everyone," Lily said proudly.

Doing his best to hide his blush, Harry led everyone upstairs and stopped outside his room. Opening the door, Harry walked inside and was quickly followed by Hermione who looked somewhat surprised. "This is a lot bigger than Nathan's room," she said, sounding somewhat disapprovingly at a perceived favoritism for Harry.

Lily smiled proudly. "It didn't use to be. Harry and Nathan's rooms were the exact same size at one time."

"What do you mean?" Mr. Granger asked.

"Harry used a Space-Enhancement Charm on all the walls to make his room larger," James explained.

Molly's eyes widened in surprise. "You managed a Space-Enhancement Charm as a first year?"

"I'm entering fourth year Charms this next term at Durmstrang," Harry said a little cockily.

"Fourth year? But you're only twelve!" Molly said in shock. "Lily, James, how is that possible? He should be a second year like his brother, Ron, and Hermione."

"One of the reasons Harry wanted to go to Durmstrang, Molly, was because they allow students to move up in year levels if they can handle the material. Harry took a test before starting Durmstrang and they placed him in third year Charms and Transfiguration last year," Lily explained, sending a proud smile at her son.

"You're really going into your fourth year for Charms and Transfiguration?" Hermione asked in amazement. "Why didn't Nathan tell me that! I bet you know a lot of advanced material. How did you cast the Space-Enhancing Charm? Is it difficult? Is there a good book that explains it?"

"Yes, I'm really entering my fourth year for Charms and Transfiguration. I don't know why Nathan didn't mention it. Yes, I know a lot of advanced Charms. No, the Space-Enhancement Charm is not difficult. And yes, I know a very good book that describes it, but it's written in German," Harry replied, answering each of Hermione's questions.

"German? They don't have books in English at Durmstrang?" Hermione asked.

"No, all the classes are taught in German, and students are all required to speak German at all times," Harry explained.

"So you speak German?" Hermione asked. "Was it hard to learn?"

"Ja," Harry replied cheekily.

"Harry, show the Grangers and the Weasleys what got you the top spot in Charms," James said.

Hermione looked confused. "It wasn't the Space-Enhancement Charm?"

"No, the Professor said I would have been one of the top students and certainly been in the running for the top spot if that's all I did, but I did something else that guaranteed me the number one spot." Harry answered as he walked over to small brown dresser that was next to his bed. Opening the top drawer, Harry carefully removed a quill.

"This," Harry said proudly, "is what earned me the top spot in Charms."

"A quill?" asked Mr. Granger.

"It's a semi-permanent enchantment receptacle," Lily said, beaming at her son. "He made it."

"Impossible," Mrs. Weasley said immediately.

"I assure you, Molly," James said with an air of authority, "Harry made it."

"What does it do?" Hermione asked, looking at the quill very intently.

"What do you think would happen if you charmed a room to expand and then someone came in and cast a finite at the walls, Hermione?" Lily asked.

"They would go back to normal," Hermione replied.

"Exactly. There are two ways to stop a spell like finite from causing the room to shrink back to normal," Lily lectured. "You can enchant the room and make it permanently larger, or you tie the spell into an object, and the canceling spell would have to be directed at the object to return the walls back to a normal size."

"Finite," James said, pointing his wand at the wall.

When the room didn't immediately start shrinking, Hermione now realized just what the purpose of the quill was. "So that quill is what is stopping the room from shrinking around us? And you made that?"

"You've just turned twelve, Harry," Arthur said in astonishment, "how in Merlin's name did you manage to make it?"

"Is it very difficult?" Mr. Granger asked.

"I had to make one for the practical portion on my Charms O.W.L. examination," Arthur said bluntly, causing Hermione gasp.

"You cast a O.W.L. level spell as a first year," Hermione said in amazement.

Harry could only shrug his shoulders and grin while the Weasleys and Hermione appeared to be in awe at his ability.

"It wasn't easy," Harry said, "and I messed up a lot. My friends could give you a very impressive list of the different ways I managed to screw up."

"Can you show me how to make one? Well, I know you can't show me because of the underage restriction, but surely you have a book on it? Or is it written in German as well?" Hermione asked growing more and more dejected as she asked more questions.

Before Harry could answer any of Hermione's questions, Nathan entered the room. "Hermione, you really shouldn't be in Harry's room—er, Harry why is everyone in your room?" Nathan asked, looking at all the adults that were standing around.

"Nathan Potter, why didn't you tell me your brother had already passed his third year in Charms and Transfiguration?" Hermione demanded.

"It didn't exactly come up," Nathan replied, suddenly realizing just how much trouble he was probably in with Hermione.

"Leave Nathan alone, Hermione, it is his birthday after all," Mrs. Granger said trying to quickly calm her daughter. "I'm sure you can make him suffer for not telling you another time."

Hermione sent a glare at Nathan that promised lots of letters and questions before saying, "Where's Ron?"

Relieved that Hermione was agreeing to put off his eventual scolding, Nathan said, "Downstairs eating another slice of cake."

"I swear, all that boy thinks about is food and Quidditch," Hermione huffed.

Harry was about to agree when a midnight black eagle owl flew in from his open window, landed on a chair, and lifted its leg, showing it held a letter and a small wrapped package.

"Mr. Popular," Lily teased as another owl entered the room, this one carrying a slightly larger package with it.

"It would certainly seem so," James said. "A little young to have so many admirers, aren't you, Harry?"

Ignoring his father's attempt to embarrass him, Harry quickly went to the two owls and removed what he assumed were birthday presents.

Opening the letter from the first owl, Harry immediately recognized the sharp, precise, penmanship of Calypso.

Harry,

Happy Birthday! I hope it's been a wonderful day for you so far.

Just so you know, I'm going to be in England for most of August. Father has sent me to visit my cousin, and I'm supposed to be taught how to act like a proper witch by my aunt. I doubt we'll be able to see each other before we go back to Durmstrang, but at least our correspondence won't take so long now.

For your birthday present, I'm sending you a complete copy of the spells that my father had me practice last summer and this summer. Hopefully it'll help you get ready for your Dark Arts class. The notebook is written in English, so unless you want to have another 'the dark arts aren't evil' conversation with your parents, I'd keep the book away from them.

Hope to hear back from you soon and, again, happy birthday,

Calypso

Harry put the letter down, took the small package, and unwrapped it. Sure enough, there was a small leather bound notebook inside.

"Whatcha get?" Nathan asked peering over his brother's shoulder.

"Just a book from a friend of mine," Harry commented nonchalantly.

"What kind of book?" Hermione asked interestedly.

"The kind that's written in German," Harry lied.

"Surely there are charms to translate a book into English," Hermione demanded.

"There are, Hermione, but they just aren't that reliable," Lily said in sympathy, "and you really don't want an incantation or wand movement to be translated wrong. The results could be very bad for the caster if it's translated improperly. I'm sure someone could create a better translation charm, but there is little demand for it since the language charm makes learning a language very easy for wizards."

"I thought you said learning German was hard," Hermione accused Harry, who was trying to relieve the other owl of its package.

"Hermione, the language charm requires you to be almost completely immersed in the language for it to work properly," Lily explained. "If it wasn't for Headmaster Dumbledore speaking to Harry in German, he would have had to go to Durmstrang without knowing a word of it."

"So I can only learn German if I can find someone who already speaks German?" Hermione asked, disappointed.

"You could always learn the hard way, without the language charm," Lily said with a smile.

"So who's this one from?" Nathan asked picking up the other parcel.

"I don't know," Harry admitted. He had already gotten an owl from Viktor earlier in the day, and he seriously doubted Kira would be sending him a birthday present. So he honestly didn't know who this present was from.

"Well, open the card and find out," Nathan said.

Mr. Potter,

While I am pleased that you will be entering my fourth year Transfiguration class this coming year, I admit that I am slightly disappointed that you did not receive the top mark for third year Transfiguration.

After hearing from Professor Kosarev what you had managed in Charms, I was, obviously, looking forward to seeing something equally as spectacular from you in Transfiguration. I was therefore disappointed in not seeing you push the limits of what I had thought possible from a boy your age in my field.

Harry, I don't need to tell you that you have a gift for Transfiguration. I have never seen a student your age grasp the theory and the practical application behind Transfiguration as readily as you do, and

I want to see you push the beyond the boundaries of what I believed possible from a child your age in Transfiguration.

Should you ever wish to discuss any aspect of Transfiguration with me, I will endeavor to make myself available to you this year. In the mean time, please accept this birthday present as a token of what I wish for you to reach for in your time at Durmstrang.

Professor Rosemburg

Confused, Harry unwrapped his Professor's present and looked at the book he had been given. There was no title, but the cover showed a red-haired wizard who slowly changed into a fox and then changed back again. Intrigued, Harry opened the book.

As he read the chapter list, Harry couldn't stop a gigantic smile from appearing on his face. If Professor Rosemburg wanted to inspire him, Harry had to agree that a book explaining advanced Human Transfiguration and the Animagus Transformation was certainly the way to do it!

"What's got you so happy?" James asked.

"My professor sent me a book on advanced Transfiguration," Harry said, already excited at the prospect of possibly becoming an Animagus like his father. He knew his mother had warned him about not trying it on his own, but he had a book explaining how to do it, and a professor who was willing to help him. Maybe he'd ask Calypso if she wanted to try it as well, that way he wouldn't technically be trying the transformation on his own. "He says he was disappointed that I wasn't the number one student for Transfiguration, and that he'll make himself available to me if I want to talk about anything."

"Well that's nice of him," James commented, looking at the book Harry had been sent. He flipped open the cover, but seeing that it was all written in German, he quickly closed it, taking his son's word that it was just a book on Transfiguration.

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The Uninvited Visitor

Nathan's Room, Godric's Hollow, Aug 15th

"You know, Hermione has been bugging me to ask you about spell creation," Nathan commented casually.

"No surprise there." Harry laughed. "Is she still mad at you for not telling her about how I managed to jump ahead in Charms and Transfiguration?"

"No, I think she's determined to catch up to you though. She keeps sending letters asking me what you did to get so far ahead," Nathan said grinning slightly.

Harry noticed his brother's grin and asked, "What's so funny?"

"I think Hermione finally realized that she wouldn't have been the number one student in our year if you had stayed at Hogwarts," Nathan replied.

"I was surprised she was first in your year honestly," Harry admitted. "It's almost always a pureblood or half-blood who had been tutored in magic already."

"That's not true," Nathan argued. "Mum was top in her year all throughout Hogwarts."

"Mum wasn't a normal Muggle-born," Harry reminded his brother. "She and Professor Snape practiced spells and potions way before she got her admission letter to Hogwarts."

"Don't remind me," Nathan said with a disgusted look on his face. "I don't know how Mum can stand working with that greas—"

POP.

Harry and Nathan both immediately turned their heads to the side and saw a very unfamiliar house elf nervously rocking back and forth on its heels.

"Um, hello," Harry said tentatively. "Who are you?"

"Is you the great Nathan Potter?" the elf asked with wide eyes.

"I'm Nathan. That's my brother Harry," Nathan said, rolling his eyes at being called the great Nathan Potter. "Who are you, and why did Uncle Sirius send you?"

"Nathan Potter asks who I is?" the house elf said in awe. "You is just as kind and courteous as Dobby thought, sir."

"Obviously," Harry said, slightly annoyed at the groveling elf, "we need to know what your name is in order to ask you something. I guess we could just call you 'elf,' but that's sort of redundant. Now, Dobby, why did Uncle Sirius send you?"

"Dobby does not know Sirius, brother of the great Nathan Potter. Dobby has come to warn the great Nathan Potter," Dobby said glancing from side to side nervously.

"Wait," Nathan said urgently, "if uncle Sirius didn't give you the secret, how did you get here? You Apparated-that should have been impossible!"

"Dobby thought hard and he popped to Nathan Potter, just like Dobby pops everywhere," Dobby said, appearing confused.

"So, the wards didn't affect you at all?" Harry asked, alarmed.

Dobby simply shook his head, causing his large bat-like ears to flop around his head.

"What do you want?" Harry demanded, drawing his wand and pointing it at the elf. He needed to tell his parents about that little flaw in the Fidelius as soon as possible.

Looking very uncomfortable at having a wand pointed at him, Dobby quickly said, "Dobby is here to warn Nathan Potter. You must not go back to Hogwarts. Bad things is happening there this year."

"What? Don't go back to Hogwarts? Absolutely not!" Nathan exclaimed.

"But you mustn't, bad things is happening there. Nathan Potter must be safe!" Dobby exclaimed.

"What kind of bad things?" Harry asked lowering his wand slightly.

"Dobby cannot say," the elf said miserably. "Dobby will already have to punish himself very badly when he goes home for warning Nathan Potter."

"So your family doesn't know you're here?" Harry pressed.

Looking absolutely terrified at the thought of his family knowing what he was doing Dobby squeaked out, "No."

"Does this have anything to do with Voldemort?" Nathan asked, causing Dobby to gasp.

"You actually said You-Know-Who's name," Harry said, slightly surprised.

"The Headmaster said I should," Nathan said strongly.

"O-okay," Harry said hesitantly.

"So Dobby, does this have anything to do with Voldemort?" Nathan asked again.

Looking absolutely terrified at hearing the Dark Lord's name, Dobby took a moment to think before he shook his head negatively.

"Can you say anything at all about what might happen?" Harry asked.

Once again, Dobby shook his head, and Nathan seemed to have had enough. "Then I'm going back to Hogwarts. With the exception of Harry, all my friends go to Hogwarts."

"Dobby cannot let Nathan Potter be in danger!" Dobby said frantically.

"I've been in danger before," Nathan said patiently.

"Nathan Potter is brave and kind, but he must not go back. Dobby will not let that happen!" Dobby decreed as he raised his hands and immediately Nathan's bed began levitating into the air. Harry was about to send a spell at the elf when Dobby disappeared with another POP and the bed fell to the floor with a loud THUMP.

"Um...how was that supposed to stop me from going to Hogwarts?" Nathan asked completely confused.

"I don't know," Harry admitted, looking just as confused by the elf's actions. "We had better go tell Mum and Dad though."

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How To Stop A House-Elf

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Aug. 15th

It had taken less than a minute for Harry to convince his parents that Nathan was not trying to prank them, and that there really was a breach in the Fidelius Charm. His parents had immediately responded by flooing Professor Dumbledore, who quickly sent his familiar, a Phoenix named Fawkes, to securely transport the entire family to Hogwarts. Harry and Nathan then told everyone about their encounter with the rouge house elf named Dobby.

"Did this elf say anything else?" asked Dumbledore.

"No, sir," Nathan said.

"I don't understand. How did a house elf bypass the Fidelus Charm?" Lily asked.

"All wards have weaknesses, Lily, you know that. Owls, and now house-elves, seem to be immune to the protective magic that stops

other magical beings from finding a home protected by the Fidelius." Dumbledore said pensively.

"I know we agreed warding against owls would be counterproductive a few years ago, but surely there is a way to stop a house-elf," Lily said.

"Unfortunately, very little is known about the magic of house-elves, but what is known is that they can ignore practically all types of wards in existence," Dumbledore said pensively. "The elves at Hogwarts, for instance, have no issue with using their method of Apparation around the ancient wards of the castle."

James looked incredulously at Dumbledore. "So you're saying this is just something we're going to have to live with?"

"No," Dumbledore said. "While it doesn't seem like this elf means any of you physical harm, it is still a security breach that we cannot allow. I have spoken with the Hogwarts elves, and they have agreed to have one of their number stay at Godric's Hollow to ensure that this unwelcome elf does not attempt to return."

"That's a relief," said Lily.

"Yes, well, I should mention that the elves have some conditions you need to agree to first," Dumbledore replied, his lips quirking up in a small smile

"Conditions?" James asked. "I didn't think elves knew how to negotiate."

"James, you have never had to mediate an argument between house-elves," Dumbledore said wearily. "They are incredibly competitive creatures when it comes to what they feel is their duty. It once took me two years to finally settle a dispute between the cleaning elves and the kitchen elves. I had tried to establish three party negotiations with the grounds-keeping elves acting as intermediaries, only to discover that both the kitchen and cleaning elves strongly disliked the grounds-keeping elves because of a

bizarre series of events that took place during my predecessor's tenure. You see, a kitchen elf had made the mistake of accidentally—"

"The conditions, Albus?" asked Lily impatiently.

"What? Oh, yes, of course. Since the elf that will be staying at your home will not be able to perform any work at Hogwarts, the elves are demanding that whichever elf is sent to Godric's Hollow be allowed to clean all the rooms, maintain some of the grounds, and cook at least two meals a week," Dumbledore explained.

"Wait a second," Harry said incredulously, "they want to do our chores?"

"Elves are awesome!" Nathan added excitedly.

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Harry's Room, Godric's Hollow, August 20th

Harry,

I'm leaving for Durmstrang within the hour. I apologize that I didn't respond to your letters, but there is a good reason why I never wrote back. My uncle took it upon himself to block delivery of my mail without telling me. My father was not pleased to discover a pile of unopened letters for me in our home when he returned from vacation.

Most of the etiquette lessons I was taught were a waste of time, especially since there were taught in conjunction with my cousin. The arrogant ass eventually annoyed me so much that I just took to cursing him after each lesson. It was rather funny to see him try to defend himself. He learned his place after the first week, and I swear he can barely look me in the eyes now without flinching.

I can't believe that Hogwarts doesn't have a dueling aspect to their Defense class. How were you able to duel me for five seconds at the start of term, let alone five minutes? And don't you dare tell me that you learned it from your Dark Arts class here at Durmstrang. Before everyone knew you as Rosemburg and Kosarev's star student, the

entire school heard that you beat practically your entire Dark Arts class on your first day. So spill it, Potter. If you didn't learn how to duel at Hogwarts, who taught you?

Oh, one last thing. I heard a bit of news today that I know will make you very happy, but I'm not going to tell you until you get back to Durmstrang. So hurry up.

See you soon,

Calypso

Placing the letter down, Harry wondered if he should tell Calypso about Quirrell. While Calypso always seemed to find a way to discover things out on her own, Harry did not want to talk about the man who tried to kill his brother, and he knew Calypso would want to know what happened.

After re-reading the bottom of the letter, Harry glanced at the calendar on his wall. Today was the 20th of August, and his Portkey would only work through the 25th.

"See you soon, indeed," he said with a smile.

AN:

Well I did say it'd be out in June. Chapter 8 is in the works now, and it'll, hopefully, be out soon. Special thanks to everyone over at DLP and my beta crew.

Chapter 8

Rising Expectations and Raising Questions

The Late Arrival

Durmstrang Institute of Magic, Aug. 25th

Arriving just outside of Durmstrang's wards, Harry put his trunk down on the ground and took a moment to reorient himself. As soon as the dizziness that accompanied international Portkeys passed, he began to follow the dirt path that lead to Durmstrang. Harry absentmindedly noted that, while not very aesthetically pleasing, the Kautokeino province was a much more tolerable place during the summer than the winter. The temperature was pleasant and Harry spotted a few students relaxing by one of the nearby lakes.

As he crossed the outer wards, Harry couldn't help but grin when he saw the school itself. While Durmstrang looked like a fierce and imposing structure during the winter, it was much less so during the summer. The school was surrounded by green grass and had to have thousands of birds lazily perched along the roof. The sight certainly diminished Durmstrang's mystique as a cut-throat school for the dark arts.

"Harry!" a booming voice called from above.

Looking up, Harry smiled when he saw Viktor hovering about a hundred feet above him on his broom.

"Viktor, it's good to see you," Harry said as Viktor swooped down from the sky. "Thanks for the birthday present. I'll make sure to wear your junior national jersey when you're playing in the world cup someday."

"I'm sorry for not getting you something better, Harry. I know you're not the biggest Quidditch fan, but between the traveling, daily practices, and games I wasn't able to shop much."

"It was a great gift, Viktor, don't worry about it. How did your team do this summer?"

"I outplayed the other Seeker on our team in every practice, but the coaches still went with Peja. He's been on the team for four years, and they felt he understood the offense better." Viktor scowled angrily. "He caught the Snitch only once in the first seven games, and we won only twice. The coaches seemed content with keeping Peja at Seeker, even though my own teammates had all but demanded that I take his place.

"So what did you do to him?" Harry asked knowingly.

"Whatever do you mean, Harry?" Viktor asked innocently.

"Viktor, please. When it comes to Quidditch, you're more ruthless than Calypso in a duel."

"You know me too well, Harry." A dark smirk appeared on Viktor's face. "Peja suffered a rather grievous training accident during a scrimmage a few weeks ago. I was feinting, and poor Peja hit the ground going full speed after a dive of over 500 feet. He broke over 20 bones and fractured his skull. The Healers ruled him medically unable to play for the last five games of the season."

Harry shook his head. "Remind me never to play Quidditch with you Viktor."

Snorting in amusement, Viktor said, "As if I could ever get you onto the pitch, Harry. We won four out of our last five games, and I caught the Snitch in every game. The coaches were really impressed."

"Good for you. I'd love to hear more, but I've got to unpack," Harry said, gesturing to his trunk.

"You are just getting here?"

Harry nodded. "My Portkey arrived less than 15 minutes ago."

"Then you had better hurry up. The welcoming feast is going to be starting in a few hours," Viktor warned.

"But it's not even noon. Why is it starting so soon?"

"Sometimes I forget that you aren't older, Harry. This will be your first welcoming feast, won't it?" Viktor asked rhetorically. "The welcoming feast takes a very long time. First, Karkaroff will make staffing announcements. The first years are then introduced as a group, but a list of first years that tested into an advanced class is also read off. The list includes the student's name, where they are from, and what classes they tested into. That typically takes a very long time. Next, each teacher will announce the students who gained the rank of Master in each of their classes. They will explain why they chose that student's final project as the best, present an award, and take a photo with each student. Finally, the students who finished last in every class are announced. Some professors simply announce the student who finished last, while others spend a good deal of time mocking the student's final project. After all of that is finished, the feast begins."

"So I had better get up to my room and start unpacking quickly."

"That would be a good idea. I'll see you at the feast, Harry—oh, and Calypso was looking for your earlier," Viktor said before taking off back into the air.

After parting from Viktor, Harry quickly made his way to the castle, up the main staircase to the fourth floor, and down the long hallway towards his room. Finally reaching the door labeled 'Potter,' Harry cast the unlocking charm and walked inside.

"Stupefy."

Harry had no chance to avoid the Stunning spell, and it smacked him straight in the chest, rendering him unconscious.

"Rennervate."

"What the hell?" Harry moaned, rubbing the back of his head.

"Sloppy, Potter. Did you practice at all this break?" Calypso mocked.

"Yes," Harry snapped as he slowly stood up, "but I didn't expect you to be waiting in my room to attack me."

"Well if you had actually arrived at a normal time like most of the school, and not waited until the eleventh hour to show up, maybe I wouldn't have cursed you."

Finally shaking off the effects of the stunning spell, Harry got his first look at Calypso since the end of last term. His first impression was that she looked very tired. Her normally perfectly-combed hair was trussed, and she had small bags under her eyes. Unable to hide his surprise, Harry asked, "What happened to you?"

Calypso simply glared at him. "My father refused to expand my room this year. He said that since you managed to expand your room by yourself, then I should be able to do it as well. I've been sleeping on a disgusting cot for the last few days, and showering in the group bathrooms."

"And what does that have to do with you Stunning me?" Harry asked, secretly amused at how annoyed his friend was.

"You need to expand my room and fix my bed. I know you don't know how to make my own bathroom yet, but you will figure out how to do that by the end of the year," Calypso growled.

"When did I become your personal maintenance wizard?" Harry asked as he casually began enlarging his own room.

"Potter," Calypso said dangerously, "I haven't been able to sleep since I got back to Durmstrang."

"That's unfortunate," Harry said, sounding unconcerned. "I imagine that must have been as annoying as being stunned the moment you walked into your room."

Calypso looked apocalyptic for a moment before she took a deep breath and immediately calmed down. "I'm sorry," she muttered.

"What was that?" Harry asked. "I couldn't hear you."

"I said, I'm sorry that I Stunned you. I've been waiting forever for you to get here and I got frustrated," Calypso admitted.

"Apology accepted," Harry said as he carefully began tying the enlarging charms to one of the receptacles he had made over the summer.

"So will you fix my room?" Calypso asked sounding exasperated.

"Are you going to ask nicely?" Harry taunted.

"Harry, will you please fix my room before I get annoyed and decide to curse you?"

"You really need to work on learning how to ask for things nicely," Harry commented, "but fine. Help me unpack, and I'll fix your room up after the feast."

"My hero," Calypso said sarcastically before beginning to stack Harry's books on his bookcase.

"So what was this news that would make me really happy?" Harry asked casually as he transfigured his small cot into a much more comfortable looking bed.

With a bright smile on her face, Calypso cheerfully replied, "Ghausam got fired."

Harry quickly spun around and stared at Calypso in shock. "What? Please tell me you're not joking."

"No joke." Calypso smiled. "My father said that the Highmaster officially let him go in early August."

"That's great," Harry said enthusiastically. "Do you know who the new Dark Arts professor is?"

"I might," Calypso said mysteriously.

"Who is it?" asked Harry. "Not that it matters. Anyone would be better than Grausam."

"True," Calypso agreed. "You'll see who it is at the welcoming feast. Are you looking forward to whatever gift you're going to be getting from Kosarev?"

"I really haven't thought much about it. I didn't even know that I would be getting a gift until Viktor told me. What about you? Will you still be getting a gift for finishing first in third year Dark Arts with Grausam gone?"

"I doubt it," Calypso replied, sounding unconcerned. "Not that it matters. Grausam being fired is enough of a gift for me."

Harry laughed. "I doubt anything Kosarev gets me will compare to that."

As the two second years continued organizing Harry's room, Calypso asked, "So how was your summer?"

"It was alright. You know most of the important stuff already. I did read some of your journal, but I haven't finished it yet," Harry admitted.

"Well, you had better start reading it," Calypso advised. "Third year is when you start to learn actual dark magic."

"I know," Harry said slightly uncomfortably. "I haven't been beaten in a duel yet, and I really don't want to start now."

"Excuse me? I do believe that you have yet to beat me in a duel, Potter," Calypso said haughtily.

"You know what I meant. I haven't lost a duel in class," he clarified. "Does that make you happy?"

"Yes."

Harry rolled his eyes while fighting to keep a smile off his face. He hadn't realized how much he'd missed Calypso over the summer. "So how was your cousin's? Was it as bad as your letter made it sound?"

"You have no idea," Calypso said ruefully. "First of all, I didn't even want to go, but my father felt that it was time that I learn how to act like a proper lady."

"Who were you staying with again?" Harry asked

"My Uncle Lucius and Aunt Narcissa."

"The Malfoys? You had to spend an entire month at Malfoy Manor? Wait... so that means Draco is your cousin!" Harry laughed. "Oh, I wish I could tell Nathan about this."

"I'm sure your brother would find it more amusing than I did," Calypso said ruefully. "After the third time Draco started whining about how your brother was allowed to join the Quidditch team when he wasn't, I started to hex him whenever he brought up your brother's name. Draco's also not very fond of you, and he asked me if I had cursed you yet."

"What did I ever do to Malfoy?" Harry asked.

"Apparently you tried to hex him and then slammed a door in his face on the Hogwarts express," Calypso replied. "At least that's what his two ogreish friends Crabbe and Goyle told me."

Shrugging Harry said, "Whatever, it's not like I really care whether Malfoy likes me or not."

Looking enviously around Harry's room, Calypso said, "You had better do as good a job on my room later."

Harry smirked. "You could just learn the spells yourself you know."

"Oh, you'll be teaching them to me for next year," Calypso said with certainty, "But I am not sleeping on a cot for another night."

"They're not that bad if you cast a cushioning charm on them," Harry said.

"I'm a Rosier. I don't sleep on cots," Calypso said arrogantly. "I think you're unpacked enough. You can put your clothes away later. Why don't you go fix my room now."

"After the feast," Harry said as he continued to put away his clothes.

"You'll be tired and half asleep if we wait that long. Just do it now," Calypso argued.

"Patience is a virtue, you know," Harry commented, "and it's not like we have a lot of time left anyway. We really should be heading down to the feast soon."

"Fine, but I don't care if I have to send a constant stream of stinging hexes at you to keep you awake, you will fix my room later," Calypso warned.

"And you wonder why your father thought you needed to learn how to act like a proper lady," Harry teased.

Calypso was halfway through the incantation for a punching hex when Harry was able to successfully cast the counter curse for the spell.

"Where exactly did you learn how to duel?" Calypso demanded angrily. "Draco was completely worthless. He didn't even think to move out of the way of the hexes I sent at him."

"My dad taught Nathan and me a little bit. You know, the whole Boy-Who-Lived thing makes both of us targets, so we learned the basics to protect ourselves," Harry said, not wanting to mention his time with Quirrell.

Calypso looked at Harry before snorting in derision. "Whatever, Harry. When you want to tell me the truth, let me know. I've got to get

changed before the feast. Meet me at the staircase in half an hour," Calypso said bluntly before walking out of the room.

Once Calypso was gone, Harry shook his head and sat down on his bed. He wasn't sure how Calypso knew he was lying, but she did. It just didn't make any sense. Did his eye twitch or something when he lied? Uncle Sirius once mentioned that Uncle Remus refused to play poker anymore because he couldn't stop himself from smiling every time he bluffed. Perhaps he had a similar problem and Calypso had picked up on it.

A knock on the door broke Harry out of his thoughts. "Come in," he called out.

The door opened, and Viktor entered with Kira trailing behind him. "Are you ready to go to the feast?" Viktor asked, tearing his eyes away from the large windows that provided a great view of the Quidditch pitch.

"Sure," Harry replied. "Calypso left a little while ago to go change. I'm supposed to meet her at the main staircase."

"Finite," Kira snapped, pointing her wand at the nearest wall.

When nothing happened, Kira looked a little upset and said, "So you made another one I see."

"Yes, the receptacle I have everything tied to will last through Christmas," said Harry. "I'll remove all the charms before I leave for break and then cast them again when I come back."

"Can you show me how to make my windows larger?" Viktor asked.

"I guess," Harry said, "but why just your windows?"

Viktor looked somewhat embarrassed. "So I can fly in and out of my room on a broom."

"Sure Viktor." Harry laughed. "I'll show you how to do it. It's actually not that hard."

After ten minutes of demonstrating how to expand a window, Kira snapped out, "Viktor, you can learn this later. Let's go to the feast," before walking out of the room.

"Why is she in such a rush?" Harry quietly asked his friend.

"She got the top spot in 4th year spell creation last year," Viktor whispered back. "She wants to get a good seat at the fest."

"Whatever. I'm getting the Charms award, but you don't see me rushing everyone downstairs," Harry muttered as he and Viktor left his room.

"It means a lot to her," Viktor defended his girlfriend. "She has always been among the top three in her class at spell creation, but this will be her first time getting the top rank for any class."

"Finally. What took you two so long, and what are you two whispering about? Never mind, I don't want to know. Just hurry up," Kira said impatiently. "Rosier had better not be long because I'm not waiting for her."

Fortunately, Calypso arrived shortly after Harry, Krum, and Kira, and the four of them made their way down the main staircase and into the Main Hall. Once inside, Kira practically dragged Viktor to the front of one of the long tables.

"Must we sit with her?" Calypso muttered to Harry as he trailed after Viktor.

"I don't particularly like her either you know," Harry pointed out, "but Viktor's my friend."

"I heard a rumor that this is the worst class of first years in a few decades," Kira said condescendingly as Harry and Calypso sat down. "Only a few of them were even able to test into an advanced class, and no one tested into a third year class."

"I was told something similar by my father. The Highmaster was not at all impressed with this year's class, apparently," Calypso confirmed.

"Good. Hopefully it won't take that long to get to the actual feast this year," Viktor added.

"How do the first years arrive?" Harry asked curiously, suddenly realizing that he didn't know.

"They arrived by Portkey earlier today," Calypso said as she began pointing out large groups of younger students around the hall to Harry. "You know, it's kind of sad that all the first years made it to Durmstrang before you bothered to show up."

"What took you so long to get here anyway?" Viktor asked.

"Who cares," Kira said before her eyes widened and she immediately stood up, her chest pushed out, her legs shoulder length apart, and her arms behind her back in a military stance.

Harry saw Calypso roll her eyes at Kira, but she, Viktor, and most of the students in the Main Hall soon stood up and assumed a similar position, though at a much more relaxed pace.

"Stand up, Harry, the professors are arriving," Calypso hissed quietly under her breath, causing Harry to quickly assume a similar position as everyone else standing around him.

Not a moment after Calypso's warning, ominous drumming began to echo around the hall, and the large double doors behind the staff table opened. All of the professors, led by Highmaster Karkaroff, slowly walked through the doors and stood behind their designated spots at the staff table. When all the staff members had made it to their position, the drumming stopped and the professors, as one, pulled out their chairs and took their seat. The students followed immediately.

Karkaroff clapped his hands and his aid handed him a piece of parchment. With the slightest look of annoyance on his face, Karkaroff

stood. "I would like to welcome our latest group of first years to Durmstrang. I'm sure that you will be a credit to our fine institution...."

In the years to come, that was as far as Harry would ever remember Karkaroff's welcoming speech. He had been scanning the staff table as soon as the professors entered the hall to get a glimpse of the new Dark Arts instructor. He had assumed that the new teacher would have just taken Grausem's spot on the table, but the History professor now occupied Grausam's former position. It wasn't until Karkaroff began speaking that Harry turned his attention to those sitting closest to the Highmaster. To Karkaroff's immediate left was Professor Kosarev, but sitting to the Highmaster's right was a face Harry remembered all too well from last year. It was Romulus Rosier.

Seeing the look of comprehension on Harry's face, Calypso leaned in and said, "I would have written to tell you, but I didn't want to chance your parents noticing my father's name and asking questions. I've told father a little bit about you. He's looking forward to seeing what you are capable of this year."

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Disappointment and Dubiousness

Main Hall, Sept. 4th

Porridge covered Harry's robes as Calypso dropped a large tome directly in front of him at the breakfast table.

"Read this."

"Good morning to you as well," Harry said sarcastically as he cast a cleaning charm to get rid of his spilled breakfast.

"Don't 'good morning' me," Calypso snapped angrily. "Read this and stop making me look like an idiot."

Glancing at the large book, Harry looked up and read aloud, "Befuddling, Breaking, and Bashing: A Guide to Questionable Magic. Are you trying to tell me something?"

Calypso simply glared at her friend. "I didn't tell my father that you were talented only to have you nearly lose your first few duels. I'd start reading that if I were you. We're going to have a few practice duels to get you back into shape after class today."

"It's not like I lost," Harry countered.

"Did you or did you not get thrown across the dueling platform by Rosemary Tomlinson? You do know she had to repeat her first year Dark Arts class, don't you? You should have wiped the floor with her," Calypso said.

"She knew a lot of spells that I hadn't seen bef—"

"From what my father tells me, you were tossed around by a simple flinging hex! When you do poorly in front of my father, it reflects badly on me, Potter, so I'm going to make sure that doesn't happen again. Understand?" Calypso demanded.

Before Harry could argue that he didn't need help, a small brown Hogwarts owl landed in front of him with a letter. Harry removed the letter from the owl's leg, curious to see just what his brother could be writing to him about so soon in the term.

Harry,

I know that I'm probably the last person you would ever expect to get a letter from, especially so soon in the year; however, prudence demands that I inform you of your brother and Ron's idiotic actions since Nathan seems reluctant to do so himself.

From what I was able to gather from Ron and Nathan, there was some sort of malfunction at the gateway to platform nine and three-quarters. Your parents and the Weasleys were somehow pushed through the barrier, which proceeded to close itself off, leaving Nathan and Ron stranded in Muggle London. Before your parents or the Weasleys could get back to Nathan and Ron, my two best friends had completely thrown all good sense away, and decided the best

way to get to Hogwarts was to fly Ron's dad's enchanted car to Scotland.

After being spotted, and photographed, by a number of Muggles over London, they crash landed into the Whomping Willow just after the welcoming feast began. Professor Snape threatened to expel them both, and the headmaster said that if they ever did something like this again, he would be forced to comply. I honestly have no idea what the two of them were thinking! They should have just waited, it wasn't like your parents were just going to forget about them!

Both Nathan and Ron are apparently embarrassed about the whole thing, and have been mumbling about probably getting a Howler from their parents.

I hope your start of term has been better. Feel free to write me if you ever want to talk.

Hermione

With a groan of disgust, Harry slammed the letter down. From what he knew about Hermione, there was no way she would have ever made something like this up, which meant his brother was getting stupider by the year. It had to be Weasley's influence. Nathan would never do something that idiotic!

"Bad news?" Calypso asked curiously.

Harry just tossed her the letter. He knew exactly what Calypso would say, and for once she would be right. Nathan could have been arrested for breaking the Statute of Secrecy. How had his brother thought this was a good idea? What in Merlin's name could have possessed Nathan to do something so absolutely stu—

"Who's Hermione?"

"Huh?" Harry asked in confusion. "Hermione? She's my brother's friend from Hogwarts."

Calypso looked at Harry impassively. "What's she like?"

"What? She's my brother's only smart friend. Who cares about Hermione, though? My brother could have been arrested. Merlin, he should have been arrested!"

"Don't be so dramatic," Calypso said. "Your brother is the Boy Who Lived, Harry."

"So he can't get in trouble? I doubt even Dumbledore could protect him from breaking the Statute of Secrecy like this again," Harry argued.

"Maybe, but I don't think so. I doubt your ministry would be all that interested in prosecuting your brother," Calypso said casually.

"It was still stupid," Harry grumbled.

"Hmm...Yes, yes it was," Calypso agreed. "If a Howler is the worst your brother has to deal with, then I'd say he is quite fortunate."

Harry's eyes lit up. "Calypso, you wouldn't know how to make a Howler, would you?"

"That depends," Calypso said deviously. "Are you going to be meeting me later for a few practice duels?"

Reluctantly, Harry pushed aside his breakfast and began reading the book Calypso brought him. He never noticed Calypso subtly burn the letter from Hermione.

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Dark Magic 101

Dark Arts Classroom, Sept. 16th

"Mr. Potter, stay behind," Professor Rosier ordered.

With a slight grimace, Harry waited for the rest of the students to clear out of the room. He knew exactly why he was being held after

class, and it wasn't to be praised by his instructor. Since the start of term, Harry was aware of his steady decline in his Dark Arts class. It was impossible for him not to be aware of it. Not with Calypso giving him almost daily reports of how disappointed her father was in him.

"Are you happy at Durmstrang, Mr. Potter?" Romulus asked once the last student had filed out of the room.

Caught slightly off guard by the question, Harry quickly responded, "Of course, sir."

"Really?" Romulus said with an air of astonishment in his voice. "You are aware that Durmstrang seeks to foster talented wizards, aren't you? Perhaps a place like Beauxbatons would be better suited for someone of your ability."

It took every bit of self-control that Harry possessed not to snap that he was without out a doubt the most talented student in fourth year Transfiguration and Charms. "I belong at Durmstrang, sir."

"So you say, yet your performance in my class says otherwise. I confess that I find myself at a loss with you Mr. Potter. I simply find it hard to connect the promising young wizard, whom my daughter spoke to me about at length this summer, with the slightly incompetent boy standi—"

"I am not incompetent," Harry said before he could stop himself.

The silver spell left Romulus wand before Harry had even finished speaking, and it struck Harry in the abdomen. A moment later Harry found himself on all fours himself dry-heaving onto the classroom floor.

"Do not interrupt me," Romulus calmly chided as if he hadn't just cursed his student. "Now, Mr. Potter, what are we going to do about you?"

Slowly standing up, Harry's mind was a whirl. How had Romulus cursed him? The oath should have forbidden him from harming any student! So lost in his thoughts, Harry didn't hear his professor repeat

his question. Harry did, however, feel the sting of the professor's curse when he didn't respond.

"Pathetic," Romulus decried. "I expect to see improvement, Mr. Potter, or else I will expect you to be willing to drop this class by Christmas. I have no interest in teaching those who don't wish to learn. Dismissed."

Harry didn't need to be told twice. Shaking slightly, he quickly made his way out of the classroom and ran as fast as his shaky legs would carry him to Calypso's room. After pounding on her door for a few seconds, the door finally opened.

"What in Merlin's name is your problem, Potter? I was studying!"

"How is it that your dad can curse students?" Harry demanded.

Calypso stuck her head out of her door and gave a slight glance around to ensure that no one was standing in the hallway. "Get inside, hurry up."

Quickly following Calypso into her room, Harry sat down in a chair and looked at his friend expectantly.

"So," she said condescendingly, "you finally screwed up enough to make him curse you."

"How can he curse students? The oath shouldn't let him!"

"The oath," Calypso said sarcastically, "is up to the Highmaster to enforce upon the professor's hiring."

"Karkaroff didn't make your father take the oath," Harry said in realization.

"Correct."

Harry looked decidedly nervous. "But...but—"

"So what did you do?"

"Excuse me?"

"What did you do?" Calypso repeated. "Father obviously cursed you. Did he finally get fed up with your abysmal performance? What curse did he use?"

"I don't know what the spell was," Harry said. "It was silver and made me want vomit as soon as possible."

"Sounds like the retching hex. You're lucky you skipped breakfast this morning, Harry. That particular spell makes you empty the contents of your stomach until you dry heave. By not eating, you only felt a tiny bit of the spell's potential effects. So what happened? Father knows that the Highmaster would prefer that he not curse students, so you must have done something seriously stupid to make him upset with you."

"He called me incompetent—"

"And you argued back," Calypso replied, shaking her head. "Potter, you could probably get away with talking back to Kosarev or Rosemburg, but only because they think you're some sort of prodigy. For the rest of us, we'd be in detention for a month. You're fortunate a retching hex is all that Father did to you. That is all he did to you, right?"

"He also told me that he expects to see me improve or to withdraw from his class," Harry admitted, very embarrassed.

"You've got to be kidding me," Calypso said angrily. "Alright, enough is enough, it's time we figured out what is wrong with you. What spell were you supposed to learn today?"

"The trauma curse."

"Alright, let's see it. Curse me," Calypso ordered.

"What?" asked Harry in horror. "No way. Do you know what that curse does?"

"It makes the victim suffer the immediate psychological effects of a traumatic experience including feelings of intense fear, helplessness, and duration and intensity of the feelings are proportional to the power behind the curse," Calypso recited perfectly.

"And you want me to curse you?" Harry asked. "Knowing what that spell does?"

Looking at Harry in annoyance, Calypso asked, "Were you able to successfully cast the spell during class?"

Slightly embarrassed, Harry replied, "A little. My partner said he felt a little scared your father would fail him."

"So the answer is no, you weren't able to cast it," Calypso said sarcastically.

"Fine, I guess not."

"Well, let's get to work then," she said. "We have to figure out what you're doing wrong and why."

"Alright, if you're sure." Harry raised his wand and looked at Calypso for confirmation. When she nodded her head, he said, "Traumata."

The spell crossed the short distance and struck Calypso in the chest. She staggered back a step or two before a look of contempt crossed her face. "Weak, Potter. I don't feel a thing."

"Traumata," Harry tried again.

"Nothing," Calypso replied.

"Traumata!"

"Wait, I think I feel something," Calypso said, holding up her hand to stop Harry from casting again.

"Really?"

"Yes, it's pity for your horrendous failure," she snapped angrily.

Harry sighed. "I just don't get it. What am I doing wrong?"

"Let's try a different tactic," Calypso said. "Show me the wand movement."

Very intricately, Harry demonstrated the precise wand movement for Calypso.

After making Harry do the wand movement a few more times, Calypso seemed pleased enough. "Well, you could probably tighten the jab at the end, but that shouldn't be stopping the spell from functioning properly. Who or what are you focusing on to make the spell work?"

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Who are you thinking of? Who do you envision when you're casting this spell? How do you focus the intent behind this curse?" Calypso asked.

"I'm not thinking about anyone in particular," Harry said. "I just think of someone becoming scared."

Calypso stared open mouthed at Harry for a moment before angrily saying, "That has to be the most pathetic thing I've ever heard. You know magic requires strong intent to work properly, especially curses. Have you been putting such horrendously weak intent behind all your dark arts spells?"

At Harry's slightly guilty look, Calypso snapped, "It's no wonder they won't work properly! Try putting some actual desire behind the spell and try it again!"

"Alright," Harry said hesitantly before focusing on causing Calypso to feel scared—no, terrified, he corrected himself. "Traumata!"

The spell smacked Calypso in between the eyes and she fell to the floor, shivered slightly, and slowly stood up. "B-better, but still not great. You need to mean it, Harry. You need to want to cause the other person to feel absolutely terrified."

"But I don't want to make you terrified of me!" Harry argued back.

"Then don't think of me," Calypso said immediately. "If our positions were reversed, and it was me who was practicing this spell on you, do you think I would be thinking of you to gather the intent behind this spell? Of course not. I would be thinking of someone I hated. Someone I wanted to fear me, someone who I would enjoy seeing terrified of my very existence."

"But I don't think I know anyone I would want terrified of me Calyp—"

"Oh, don't give me that shit, Potter. Do you remember last year at all? After your little stint in the hospital wing, you were so scared of being attacked by your fellow first years that you routinely humiliated them in class everyday. Not only that, you wanted the older years to be so intimidated, so terrified, of crossing wands with you, that you agreed to jump a year in the Dark Arts. So, don't you dare tell me that you can't summon the desire to make others fear you, Harry."

"Okay, you've made your point," Harry growled.

"Good. So stop whining and cast the curse correctly."

"Traumata!"

This time, as soon as the curse struck Calypso, her eyes widened in horror and she fell to the floor. Unsure if he had done the curse properly, Harry watched as Calypso grabbed her legs and began rocking back and forth in the fetal position mumbling incoherently to herself.

"Finite," Harry cast quickly. "Are you alright?" he asked worriedly.

Unwrapping her arms from her legs, Calypso stood up slowly, and took a noticeable step away from Harry when he made to help her up.

Harry could see a tinge of fear still in her eyes when she looked at him, and he felt horrible for causing it.

"No," Calypso said quietly. "No, I'm not alright. That was...intense, but you did a good job."

"I'm so sorry," Harry said sincerely. "I didn't mean to overdo it."

"No, you did a good job," Calypso said, not meeting Harry's eyes. "Whatever you used to focus on, it worked. If you can cast the rest of your spells at the same level, you might become one of father's favorite students."

"I'm not sure if that's a good thing," Harry admitted.

"I-I think we've solved your problem, Harry. Now leave me alone, I need to study," Calypso said, putting more space between the two of them.

"Are you sure you're alright?" Harry asked softly as he took a step towards her.

Calypso's demeanor immediately changed and she drew her wand. Harry immediately stopped moving towards her when he noticed that the wand's tip was glowing an angry shade of purple. Slowly Harry raised his hands and took a step away from Calypso. He saw Calypso's normally expressionless face show anger, fear, and confusion before she slowly lowered her wand.

"Of course I'm not alright!" she snarled. "You just hit me with a very powerful trauma curse. Dark magic doesn't just disappear with a finite, Potter. All it does, if anything, is stop the curse from continuing to do harm. Did you think you could say finite and the effects would disappear like a Jelly-Legs jinx? That's not how dark magic works. I'll be alright, but I need some time to get over the spell. I'll be fine tomorrow, but for now, just leave me alone."

Harry felt like Calypso had just punched him. "I'm sorry."

"Don't apologize, Potter," she said, suddenly deflating and sounding tired. "I knew what the curse did, and I knew what could happen. Like I said, I'll be fine tomorrow."

"Alright," Harry said hesitantly, "I'll see you tomorrow. Oh, and Calypso?"

"What, Potter?" she asked softly.

"Thank you for your help."

There was a pause before Calypso said, "You're welcome, Harry."

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The Project

Durmstrang Library, Oct. 3rd

"Why do you want to study all the way back here?" Calypso asked with a bored expression on her face.

"Because no one ever comes back here," Harry whispered, "and I didn't want to be overheard by anyone."

"It's called a silencing spell, Harry, now can we go back to our normal table?" Calypso asked, moving to leave.

"Wait." Harry grabbed her hand and practically pulled her down into a nearby chair. "I have something I wanted to show you."

"It had better be good, Potter," Calypso said, folding her arms and looking impatiently at her friend.

"Oh, it is, don't worry." Harry stood up and pulled several old texts on goblins off a nearby shelf and placed them in front of Calypso.

"Mackrack the Magnificent: A Biography of 11th century Goblin Warlords, Kriegrump: How to cook Goblin Style, and Fleshrice the Foul: One Goblin's Attempt to Tame a Hydra. Harry, if I were you, I'd

make your point very quickly before I decide to hex you for wasting my time," Calypso warned.

With a roll of his eyes, Harry tapped each of the books with his wand, revealing their actual titles.

"An illusion?" Calypso asked, sounding impressed.

"After your father decided to test me for them, I decided they might be interesting to read about," Harry explained.

"Well how would you feel if one of your worst students suddenly became one of your best?" Calypso asked. "You've really impressed him lately, Harry. He was really surprised with how easily you were able to counter your opponent's spell chain in your last duel. You haven't been holding back during our duels, have you?"

Harry grinned slightly at Calypso's praise. It hadn't taken long for him to re-establish himself as one of the top students in his Dark Arts class once he began casting his spells with negative intent behind them. In fact, his spells were now consistently among the strongest in the class. The sudden turn around and increased intensity of his curses was something that Professor Rosier was very quick to spot, and he had begun having Harry duel more frequently to see the extent of his improvement.

"Calypso, if I held back during our duels, you'd probably curse me into a million pieces." Harry pointed out before lowering his voice. "Listen, over the summer Professor Rosemburg sent me a letter. Basically, he said that he was upset that I didn't get the top spot in his transfiguration class." Seeing that he had Calypso's undivided attention, Harry pressed on. "He also sent me a book on advanced human transfiguration, including the Animagus transformation."

Calypso sat up straight before turning her attention back to the books in front of her. After reading the new titles, Calypso smirked and looked up at Harry. "So when do we start?"

"You really want to try it?" he asked. "Not many people can do it."

"No Harry, I don't want to try it, I want to do it," Calypso clarified. "The Rosiers have had a number of Animagi' in our family line, and I believe your grandfather possessed the talent, right? So you probably inherited it. Obviously, Rosemburg clearly thinks you could manage it as well."

"How did you know my grandfather was an Animagus?" Harry asked, surprised.

"Animagi need to register across Europe," Calypso replied. "Not all of them do, of course, but those who do are a matter of public record."

Looking confused, Harry asked, "And why were you looking at an old list of Animagi?"

"Do you think that you're the first person to think that this would be something worth trying?" Calypso asked. "It's essentially an automatic 'M' for whatever year of transfiguration you are in. Not to mention how useful it would be having an animal form."

"You weren't seriously thinking about doing it by yourself, were you?" Harry asked. "Even Rosemburg told me not to do that. It's supposedly really dangerous."

"That's why I was looking at the Animagi list," Calypso explained. "The ability is usually passed on, and I needed to know who else I could potentially work with."

Harry nodded his head. It made sense. Still, he couldn't help but think Calypso was holding something back from him. "Okay, so when do you want to start?"

"Immediately."

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Whatever Doesn't Kill You

Harry's Room, Durmstrang, Oct. 30th

"Do it again."

"I think that's enough for tonight."

"Do. It. Again."

"Are you sure? We've been practicing for a while. And I know it hurts."

"Of course it does," Calypso said irritably, "but since I can't cast the spell, you're getting more practice at Transfiguration. The only way I'm going to be able to keep up with you is if I have a better understanding of what the transformation feels like. I'm not going to fall behind and let you move on to the next stage without me."

Harry sighed. "Calypso, don't worry so much. I'll wait for yo—"

"No you will not!" she snapped. "If I can't keep up, you will not slow down for me. If you actually think that's a good idea, then you should just go back to Hogwarts!"

"I was only trying to be nice!" Harry spat.

"Well don't be. You came here to become a better wizard. That means you can't slow down your progress for anyone. You want to be nice? To help me? Then cast the spell again."

"Fine, see if I care." Harry said harshly, his voice belying his hesitancy to raise his wand. It had been almost a month since Harry and Calypso had gone to Professor Rosemburg and asked about the Animagus transformation. While Rosemburg had been rather dismissive of Calypso's chances at managing the process, he put up with her presence at Harry's request.

"Ready?" Harry asked, again.

At Calypso's confirmation, Harry raised his wand and slowly ran it over her arm. With a muttered incantation, he jabbed his wand into Calypso's hand.

Calypso bit her lip as the bones, muscles, and tendons in her left hand were reshaped and contorted in different directions. When the transfiguration was completely, Calypso took a deep breath and gazed at the fearsome bear paw and claws that her left hand had turned into. "I need to learn some partial transfiguration. Could be useful for a duel," she muttered while taking a swipe with her transfigured hand.

"Ready for me to change it back?" Harry asked after a few minutes of letting Calypso get used to the different appendage.

"Go ahead." Calypso lifted her arm up to Harry and let him cast the counter to the transfiguration.

When the transfiguration was complete, Calypso couldn't help but softly rub the back of her hand. "I can tell you're getting better at the spell, but it still hurts."

"Do you want to visit Lady Shluga?" Harry asked, leaning forward to look at Calypso's hand. "It doesn't look like any of the bones are misplaced."

"No, nothing feels wrong." Calypso flexed her hand a few times. "I think it's alright, just a little sore."

"Sorry about that," Harry said sheepishly. "I'm still not sure what I'm doing wrong. The transfiguration should happen instantaneously, but it's not for some reason. Rosemburg said he'd work with me this weekend, so, hopefully, I'll be able to figure out what I'm doing wrong soon."

A soft knocking on the door caused Calypso to swallow whatever reply she was about to make, and Harry stood up and opened the door, revealing Viktor and Kira.

"Err, hey Viktor," Harry said. "Do you need something?"

Viktor smiled. "Kira has just told me that you are trying to become an Animagus?"

"I hate to break it to you Krum," Calypso drawled, "but your girlfriend is liar."

"Please," Kira said dismissively. "I overheard your meeting with Potter in the library. I didn't think you would actually try it, but when you started monopolizing Rosemburg's office hours, I knew what you two were doing.."

"And we would like to become Animagi as well," Viktor said giving his girlfriend a look.

"No," Calypso said simply.

"I don't think it's up to you Rosier," Viktor said challengingly. "Unless you've been holding back a lot in transfiguration, I think it's Harry's decision."

"There has never been a Megara with the capability to become an Animagus, and Krum, you are more interested in flying on that twig of yours than actually doing work," Calypso said haughtily. "You both would just slow Harry and I down."

Kira's face turned red in anger at being reminded of her bloodline's less-than-stellar reputation for developing magical talents.

"Kira," Krum warned, seeing his girlfriend reaching for her wand.

"The truth hurts, Megara," Calypso said icily. "Now leave. Harry and I would like to get some more practice in tonight, and I doubt you would be able to do the magic involved."

Sensing that the situation could very easily devolve into an exchange of curses, Viktor turned to Harry for help. "I promise that I will work hard Harry. You told me last year that you felt I had a talent in Transfiguration. I promise that I'll work hard at this. And who's to say that Kira cannot become an Animagus just because of her family's history? Kira, how long has it been since a member of your family has attempted to become an Animagus?"

"Over five generations," Kira snapped, not turning her glare away from Calypso, who returned the stare defiantly.

"Five generations is a long time. The talent easily could have entered her family in that time," Viktor argued.

"Perhaps Krum's right, Harry," Calypso said, causing everyone to fall silent in surprise. "Not about Megara, mind you- her bloodline is as worthless as a Muggle's-but perhaps we should allow Krum to practice with us."

Calypso's comment seemed to push Kira over the edge. Before Krum could stop her, Kira drew her wand and fired off a hex at Calypso. Without a second thought, Harry cast a protego over Calypso, causing the spell to redirect and strike an empty chair, scorching the back of it.

"Relying on Potter to fight your battles for you now Rosier?" Kira taunted. "How pathetic."

"Enough!" Viktor quickly cast Expelliarmus and disarmed Kira, preventing her from sending another hex. Kira met Viktor's eyes for a moment before folding her arms over her chest and sending a glare at her boyfriend. Turning back towards Harry, Viktor said, "I'm sorry about this Harry. Just...give us a chance. I promise you won't regret it."

"I'll help you, Viktor," Harry said, pointedly excluding Kira.

"Thank you, Harry." Viktor looked at Harry's destroyed chair and turned to Kira. "Don't you have something you would like to say? An apology, perhaps?"

"I'm sorry for your chair," Kira muttered. Looking as though she had just ate something foul, she added, "Will you please help me as well?"

"Why should he bother," Calypso said patronizingly. "You're not worth his time."

"If you help me, I'll help you Potter, " Kira said, speaking directly to Harry and ignoring Calypso entirely. "Viktor tells me Spell Creation is still your worst subject, and you'll only fall further behind unless someone actually takes the time to help you. And you know Professor Cherny won't bother with a second year."

"I can help him," Calypso interjected. "He doesn't need you."

Kira sent a haughty look at Calypso and snorted in derision. "It's quite simple Potter. Would you rather learn from someone who's just slightly above average in your class or someone who's one of the best at the subject two years ahead of you? I can get you caught up with the basics and show you what you'll need for next year as well."

"Harry, please?" Viktor added. "Give her a chance."

"You'll help me whenever I have a question?" Harry clarified. "And once I get caught up, you'll continue working with me?"

Kira gave her boyfriend a very annoyed look, but, seeing Viktor's nod, she said, "Fine. But don't expect me to hold your hand Potter! I'm not going to be doing your work for you."

Harry thought about it for a moment. While he wasn't in any immediate risk of failing Spell Creation, he was still in the bottom portion of the class. Begrudgingly, he admitted that he could use some help, and Kira was one of the best in her year at the subject. "Alright, fine. You can work with us as well."

"Thank you Harry. Now, I've got to get to practice. Let me know when you want to start," Viktor said before pulling his girlfriend out of the room.

"What were you thinking?" Calypso snapped at Harry the second Viktor and Kira left the room. "Krum. Fine. He'll probably get bored of the work in a month and go back to chasing Snitches, but Megara? She treats both of us like shit!"

"I'm still behind in Spell Creation," Harry bit out, clearly unhappy. "I need help, and, as much as I dislike her, Kira is very good at the

subject. With her help, I should be able to catch back up and maybe get ahead of everyone else by the end of the year. At the very least, I'll get some advice from her for my final project. Besides, if you're right, and she can't become an animagus, she'll probably give up soon anyway."

"It's not worth putting up with her," Calypso said irritably before an even darker look crossed her face. "Oh, Harry?"

"Yes?"

With a sharp upwards flick of Calypso's wand, Harry found himself hoisted up by his ankle and dangling in front of Calypso, his wand falling out of his hand to the floor. "I can protect myself from Megara!"

Harry looked at Calypso in shock. "What are you talking about?"

"She sent a lousy bruising spell at me, and I was looking forward to redirecting it right back into her smug little face when you cast that stupid shield charm." Calypso punctuated her point by flipping Harry so he was right-side up, yet still several feet in the air, and then casting a sticking charm on the nearest wall and sticking Harry to it.

"Calypso, get me down now!" Harry yelled.

"The Sticking Charm should wear off soon, Harry. I've never been that good with them. Have a good night." Calypso cast a silencing charm on the door before walking out of the room.

"Calypso!"

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An Ominous Meeting

Durmstrang Library, Nov. 1st

"Well, I think you've got it, Viktor. We can work on it a little bit later if you want, but I don't think we should push our luck casting spells in

the library. Just remember that intent is all that really matters. Don't get caught up so much in the wand movements," Harry instructed.

Viktor nodded his head before successfully summoning his bag from beside their table. "Thank you again, Harry. Do you think Kosarev will really give us a quiz tomorrow?"

Harry shrugged his shoulders in an unconcerned manner. "I don't know. Considering that most the class wasn't able to do the Summoning charm, and this is the second week he's had to spend time answering questions about it, I wouldn't be surprised."

"What are you doing later tonight?" Viktor asked. "Want to work on that essay from Rosemburg on switching spells?"

"Sorry Viktor, I've already promised Calypso that we'd work on our project tonight," Harry replied. "Are you having problems with the essay or something? I thought it was pretty straight forward."

"No, not particularly. I just wasn't sure if you had done it yet..." Viktor trailed off as his face darkened and he sent a glare at someone over Harry's shoulder.

Turning around, Harry saw two older students had just entered the library. From the way Viktor was staring at one of them, Harry removed his wand and hoped that he wouldn't have to stop his friend from sending curses across the library.

"Who's that?" Harry asked.

"Deddrick."

"Err, okay," Harry said, uncertainly looking between the two students, "umm, who is that?"

"Deddrick," Viktor spat, "is the short blonde one. I despise him."

"Obvious," Harry joked. "You look like you're about to start firing curses. Why don't you like him?"

"Deddrick is a good student," Krum said begrudgingly before a slight smirk crossed his face, "but a poor Quidditch player. I beat him badly in a match during my first year, and he took exception to losing. After I caught the Snitch, he asked me to show him how I did the maneuver I used to beat him. When I went to help him after the match, he and his friends ambushed me while I was in the air. They cursed me and after I hit the ground, they left me lying unconscious on the Quidditch pitch. I was found a few hours later and had to spend a few days in the hospital wing."

Harry couldn't help but let his concern show. It had taken him a day to have his entire scapula replaced. Whatever happened to Viktor must have been pretty horrible to warrant an extended stay in the hospital wing.

"Since Deddrick is a year older than me, he and his friends took to randomly cursing me throughout my first year. They tried to keep at it during my second year, but I practiced dueling with my father over the summer to help in my Quidditch conditioning. When it became clear that I could fight back, he and his friends decided to take a different approach. One night I came back from a late practice to find my room completely trashed, and the next day Deddrick started the rumors that I was going to fail out of Durmstrang. I can't prove it, but I know Deddrick broke into my room and saw my first year grade report. I truly hate him."

"Is that one of his friends?" Harry gestured to the tall brown haired boy standing next to Deddrick.

For the first time, Viktor glanced away from Deddrick and turned his attention to the student standing next to him. "No, that's his older brother Havard. He's a seventh year, and a very good duelist."

The older boy looked over, and Harry met his eyes for a moment. Havard then turned to his brother and whispered something to him. Deddrick quickly turned his head and a large grin appeared on his face as he started to walk over to their table.

"Well, well, well, look who we have here," Deddrick said, drawing the attention of several nearby students. "What are you doing in the

library Krum? Surely you haven't passed enough classes to be allowed in here?"

Before Harry could so much as warn his friend, Viktor had stood up and had his wand pointed a few inches away from Deddrick's face. Harry sent a nervous glance at Havard, who had followed slightly behind his brother. Gripping his wand in his hand, Harry hoped that Viktor wouldn't cast a spell. Havard would no doubt defend his brother, and Harry did not want to get involved in a fight between upperclassmen, especially against a student who was known to be a good duelist.

"Mr. Krum, put your wand away at once!" Lady Doktor snapped, quickly making her way over to their table. Her wand was out, and she looked incensed that anyone would dare start a fight in the middle of her library.

When Viktor lowered his wand, Deddrick sent him a superior smirk. "Detention for you Krum," he whispered.

"Mr. Rowle, Mr. Krum, my office, now." Seeing the shocked look on Deddrick's face, Lady Doktor said, "Yes, the both of you. Right now."

Harry could only watch as Viktor and Deddrick followed the angry librarian towards her office. Sitting back down at the table, Harry took out a transfiguration book and waited for Viktor to come back. While he hoped Viktor wouldn't get in much trouble, Harry couldn't help but be slightly relieved at the librarian's timely intervention.

"Do you mind if I sit down Potter?"

Looking up from his book, Harry saw that Havard had not followed his brother and was standing on the other side of his table. Hoping that the older boy wasn't looking for a fight, Harry nodded his head.

Havard smiled and sat down in the chair directly across from Harry.

"I do hope your friend doesn't get detention for more than a day or two," Havard said, his German carrying a slight Scandinavian accent.

"Um, yeah, me too," Harry said uncomfortably. "Can I help you with something?"

Havard took out his wand and lazily cast a spell. "There, now we won't be overheard."

Despite his nerves, Harry asked, "What spell did you use? I've never heard of an area effect silencing charm."

"It's not," Havard replied. "The spell just causes anyone around us to hear a soft buzzing sound."

"Can you show me the wand movements?" Harry asked hesitantly.

"The incantation is Muffliato," Havard said before casually demonstrating the spell. "It's quite useful for keeping conversations private."

Harry made a note of the spell and the wand movement in a notebook before nervously saying, "So, um, what do you want to talk to me about?"

Havard's face darkened somewhat. "I'm here to warn you about Rosier. You should stay away from her Potter."

"What?" Harry asked. "Why?"

"Why else," the older boy said sarcastically. "She's giving her father information on your brother."

Harry shook his head in denial. "No, she wouldn't do that. Calypso never asks me anything about my brother."

"Well then she's trying to get information on your parents or you." Havard warned. "Listen to me Potter. I've seen her give reports about you and your family to her father, and I know she's researching your family. Everyone knows Mr. Rosier was a Death Eater, so I'm warning you, be careful."

"Calypso wouldn't do that," Harry hissed. "She's my friend!"

Havard simply snorted. "You know, for a supposedly smart kid, you're really fucking stupid."

Before Havard could say anything else, he turned his neck around and quickly canceled the spell he'd placed around them. A moment later, Viktor arrived with an angry looking Deddrick trailing a few feet behind him.

"Alright there, Harry?" Viktor said looking at Havard with distrust.

"Don't worry so much, Krum," Havard said dismissively as he stood up from his seat.

Viktor slowly walked around Havard and sat back down next to Harry.

"Potter," Havard said in farewell before walking out of the library with his brother.

"Why was Havard talking to you?" Viktor asked darkly.

"It was nothing," Harry lied tensely. "He showed me a spell and just waited for his brother to get back. What do you know about him?"

"A little, but not a whole lot. Most of what I know about him is rumor," Viktor admitted. "He is supposedly very good at Potions and the Dark Arts. He didn't threaten you did he? You could probably stop him from doing so pretty quickly if he did.

"Oh?" Harry asked. "How's that?"

"The Rowle family has always been close to the Rosiers. If you said something to Calypso, or maybe even Mr. Rosier, Havard and Deddrick would leave you alone."

"H-how close are his family to the Rosiers?" Harry asked hesitantly.

"Very," Viktor said seriously. "Thorfinn Rowle was believed to be involved with the Dark Lord in Britain, just like Calypso's father. I believe your ministry even has a standing arrest order for Thorfinn,

which is why his family moved away from Britain. What exactly did Havard say to you, Harry?"

"It was nothing, Viktor. Don't worry about it." Harry said, a bit of doubt creeping into the back of his mind.

"If you say so, Harry."

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Main Hall, Nov. 15th

"Nothing good can come from this," Harry muttered to himself as he put his brother's letter down on the table.

It seemed like once again his brother was involved in something that should just be left alone. The mythical Chamber of Secrets had allegedly been opened at Hogwarts, and the caretaker's cat had been the first victim. From what little Harry remembered about the legend, the Chamber was supposed to house some sort of weapon that only Salazar Slytherin or his heir could control.

While the news about the Chamber's potential opening was disturbing, it was Nathan's questions about Polyjuice Potion that had Harry really concerned. Nathan had no business even knowing about Polyjuice Potion, let alone asking questions about the best method of brewing it. Polyjuice was a N.E.W.T.- level potion, and the only reason Harry had even heard of it was because Calypso had asked Professor Rosemburg about using it to help with their Animagus practice. Rosemburg had said that Polyjuice only works with human hair, and if animal fur was used it could have dire repercussions.

Knowing that he was probably going to regret it, Harry took out a small piece of parchment.

Nathan,

I don't have my copy of Hogwarts: A History, but I do vaguely remember a bit about the Chamber of Secrets. Are you certain that

it's not just some prank? Have there been any other attacks or anything? What do Mum and Dad think about all this?

As for Polyjuice Potion, yes, I know what it is, but why do you want to know about it? It's a very difficult, not to mention restricted, piece of magic.

I have no idea how to brew Polyjuice Potion. I could probably look it up in the library here, but I'm not going to tell you how to make it unless you tell me exactly why you want it. I doubt you'll be able to find a book describing how to make it since any book with the instructions would almost certainly be in the Restricted Section. If you really want to know how to make it, I'll copy down the instructions and give it to you over Christmas, but only if you tell me what it's for.

Please be careful,

Harry

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The Warning Part 2

Harry's Room, Nov. 20th

"...and then she started to get desperate," Kira gloated. "I know because the little bitch started to send some really nasty spells at me. I narrowly dodge a compression hex when I saw my chance. Rosier was trying to keep me on the defensive, and I was able to hit her with a stunner before she could put up her shield. She dropped like a puppet with its strings cut off. You should have seen her face when her father reinnervated her. Then when he complimented me and told her to stay after class, it was hilarious!"

"I knew you would beat her eventually," Viktor praised. "You've worked very hard this year in your Dark Arts class."

Harry nodded his head in agreement although he lacked Viktor's enthusiasm. If he knew Calypso, she would not be happy with losing to Kira in a duel, especially if her father was watching.

"Well, I think Rosier's rule as the top student in the Dark Arts is over," Kira said smugly. "It was only a matter of time, after all. I don't care how much her father crammed into her head before starting school, I'm a fourth year and she's just an ickle second year. It was bound to catch up with her."

"I'd be careful," Viktor warned. "Calypso isn't your average second year. She will want to get back at you."

"Now there's an understatement," Harry muttered as Kira continued to explain how she bested Calypso during the duel.

In retrospect, Harry was wishing he had told Viktor that he had been too busy to see his progress on the Animagus transformation today. Now, he was most likely going to have to put up with an angry Calypso and a gloating Kira in the same room. Certainly a recipe for disaster.

The door to his room burst open so suddenly that Harry drew his wand. When he looked up and saw the furious expression on Calypso's face, he put his wand away. "Hey, Calypso, I was just assessing Viktor's progress. I'd say he's almost caught up on the readings."

Completely ignoring Harry's greeting, Calypso stormed over to Kira. "You got lucky, Megara. It won't happen again."

Never one to back down, especially from Calypso, Kira stood up and returned Calypso's glare defiantly. "Did your daddy make you cry, Calypso? It looked like you were tearing up when I was leaving."

"My father made it clear to me that losing to someone from a family as pathetic as yours was unacceptable," Calypso spat viciously. "Not that he needed to bother telling me. What pureblood family doesn't know that the Megaras are the laughing stock of society. How your family has continued to find other purebloods to procreate with, I'll never know."

Drawing her wand, Kira looked hatefully at Calypso. "You know, it took me a while to figure out how a pathetic little girl like you managed to beat everyone in class. It wasn't until my brother mentioned something in a letter earlier this year that I put it all together. You're nothing special, Rosier. Without your little trick you're an average duelist at best, and your father knows it."

"Flagrate," Calypso snarled viciously, sending a streak of fire at Kira, who dodged out of the way.

Instead of sending a curse back at Calypso, Kira crossed the small distance between them and tackled the smaller girl to the floor.

Before the fight could get out of hand, Harry and Viktor both cast *Expelliarmus*.

Harry's spell hit Calypso while Viktor's struck Kira. The two girls were thrown apart from one another and their wands flew into Harry and Viktor's outstretched hands. "Kira, Calypso get out! If you're going to fight, it is not going to be in my room," Harry demanded.

Without waiting for Kira or Calypso's response, Viktor stood up. "Kira, let's go," he said, practically dragging his girlfriend away from Calypso. Stopping at the door, Viktor turned and said, "I'm sorry about this, Harry. Can we pick up where we left off this weekend?"

"That's fine, Viktor," Harry replied tensely.

"You should watch your back around Rosier, Potter," Kira snarled from the doorway.

Without any hesitation, Viktor grabbed Kira's arm and pulled her from the room, the door slamming behind them.

"What was that supposed to mean?" Harry asked turning to Calypso, who was still glaring at the spot where Kira had previously been standing.

"Nothing," Calypso said, shaking with rage. "My wand?" she asked, sticking her hand out expectantly.

"Are you going to curse me like you did last time I stopped a fight between you and Kira?" Harry said, letting his own anger show.

"What do you think?" Calypso challenged.

While he didn't put his wand away, Harry handed Calypso her wand back. The second her wand was in her hand, Calypso turned around and stormed out of the room.

Harry cast a locking charm on the door and fell backwards onto his bed. Kira's parting statement about Calypso was repeating in his head.

'Watch your back around Rosier.'

What was going on? First it was Rowle warning him about Calypso, and now it was Kira. What did they know about her that he didn't, and how could he trust them to be telling the truth? Harry had never even met Rowle before that day outside the library, so who knew what reason he had for telling him Calypso was spying on him, or even if it was true. And Kira- well, Kira and Calypso shared a mutual hatred for one another, so he couldn't take anything she said about Calypso without a little bit of suspicion.

Still...two separate people both warning him about Calypso couldn't be a complete coincidence, could it?

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The Talk

Boys' Hallway, Dec. 3rd

It had been a tense two weeks for Harry Potter and Viktor Krum. While Calypso had beaten Kira in their next Dark Arts class, it had been a close duel, and Kira had all but demanded a rematch, which Professor Rosier had promptly granted. Kira won the rematch, and Professor Rosier had declined his daughter's demand for yet another duel. Professor Rosier it seemed had had enough and said that they

needed to practice against other opponents. Kira took that to mean that Professor Rosier was tired of seeing his daughter beaten, and made sure to remind Calypso of it at every opportunity. Naturally, that put Calypso in an almost perpetual bad mood.

Maybe it was because Calypso was upset, or perhaps it was because he was looking for inconsistencies in her behavior, but Harry had begun to suspect that Calypso was indeed digging for information about him.

He didn't have any real proof, but he started to notice the innocuous questions that she would push him to answer. Seemingly irrelevant things like, "Do you really think our Animagus forms reflect our personality?" would lead to pressing questions about what he thought his form would be. Harry couldn't put his finger on it, but Calypso was acting oddly, and there was only one person he felt he could get an honest answer from about it.

Knocking on Viktor's door, Harry contemplated whether he wasn't just looking for odd behavior from Calypso and it was really nothing.

After a minute of waiting for Viktor to open the door, Harry wondered if perhaps his friend wasn't out flying on his broom on the Quidditch pitch. Shrugging his shoulders, Harry cast *alohomora* on Viktor's door and walked inside.

He stopped before fully crossing the threshold into the room.

Viktor was on his bed with Kira laying on top of him, snogging him senseless. Their robes were haphazardly tossed in a corner of the small room, and Kira was wearing only her bra and knickers while Viktor was only in his boxers. Harry couldn't help but watch the two older students moan in each others mouths for a few moments before they noticed his presence.

"Potter!"

"Get out, Harry!"

Stumbling backwards out of the room, Harry just narrowly dodged a rather nasty green and yellow curse sent from Kira's wand at his head. Without thinking, he sprinted back to his own room and quickly closed the door.

Sitting in a chair, Harry couldn't get the image of a nearly naked Kira out of his mind. Her purple bra and panties left little to the imagination, and Harry couldn't stop the little smile that crossed his face.

He wasn't sure how long he sat in that chair thinking about Kira's purple knickers, but soon enough there was a loud and demanding banging on his door. With a wave of his wand he unlocked the door and an angry Kira and Viktor walked into his room. From the look on their faces, Harry was rather glad that neither had their wands pointed at him.

"What were you doing interrupting us, Potter, you little pervert!" Kira demanded.

"It was an accident, honestly," Harry said quickly. "I'm sorry. I just wanted to talk to Viktor."

"The door was locked," Viktor said, clearly upset.

"So?" Harry responded. "Your door is always locked. I just thought you were going for a fly, or studying, or—"

"The doorknob was red, Potter," Kira hissed. "I cast the charm myself!"

Confused, Harry just stared at Kira. "Um, what does that have to do with anything?"

Viktor sighed and rubbed his temples. He shot a look to Kira that said 'I told you so,' and took a seat on Harry's bed. "A red doorknob means the room is being used...by couples, Harry, and that they are not to be disturbed."

Harry blushed. "I—er—well, I mean, I didn't know. I'm sorry."

There was a very tense moment of silence before Viktor asked, "So what was so important that you needed to talk to me immediately?"

Fighting the blush on his face whenever he looked at Kira, Harry decided the ground was a very safe place to look at. "I- err, well, this will probably sound silly, but, umm, I want to know if you think Calypso might be... spying on me?"

When Viktor didn't immediately respond, Harry looked up and saw the look of deep contemplation on his friend's face. Kira, on the other hand, was smirking at Harry with a look of superiority on her face. "Of course she is. You're just now realizing it?"

"You mean it's true?" Harry gasped, looking to Viktor for confirmation.

"There are rumors," Viktor said, "but no one knows for certain."

"What kind of rumors?" Harry pressed.

"It's just-well, many people suspect that Calypso is only friends with you because she wants to give her father information about your brother. It wouldn't be that surprising. Her father," Viktor scowled, "the entire Rosier family actually, is renown for their use of the dark arts throughout Europe. Your brother seemingly did the impossible in stopping a killing curse. It would make some sense if they were interested in how that was possible."

"But she's never so much as asked about Nathan," Harry argued, "and no one knows how Nathan survived the killing curse. Besides, I thought most people thought she was training me to be the next dark lord or some rubbish like that."

"A few still believe that," Kira confirmed. "But, I think that Rosier was the one who hit you with the bone-breaking curse last year."

"What!" Harry exclaimed. "But I didn't even meet her until a month after that."

"And what did you do after you were attacked? You were so freaked out that you started learning the dark arts, and then you didn't think

twice about befriending someone like Rosier," Kira said seriously. "Had you been thinking rationally, you never would have gone anywhere near Rosier. She clearly attacked you that day to trick you into befriending her. Now, you had better run back to Hogwarts before she realizes that you've finally caught on to her plan. If you don't get away quickly, she might figure out that you know. If she tells her father that you know of her plan, it'll only be a matter of time before professor Rosier sneaks into your room in the middle of the night and –"

"Kira, that's enough," Viktor said sharply, seeing the look growing horror on his friend's face. "Harry, relax, Kira is messing with you. No one actually thinks Rosier attacked you. This isn't some mystery story on the wireless where some poor sap has his life manipulated by a secret society. If you believe that Calypso, at age twelve, was capable of that ridiculous level of manipulation, you might as well believe in soul bonds, magical cores, or that the American government is trying to blend muggle technology with magic."

Harry let out a breath he didn't know he was holding and sent a hate filled glare at Kira, who simply smirked back at him. Shaking his head at the ridiculousness of Kira's theory, Harry asked, "Do you think she's spying on me, Viktor?"

Viktor shifted uncomfortably. "I don't know Harry. Last year, I do not believe so, but who's to say what her father actually thinks of you."

Harry had no response. He knew Calypso had told her father a bit about him during the summer, and, prior to his improvement in the Dark Arts, Calypso would constantly mention her father's opinion of him, so they obviously talked about him. But did that mean she was spying on him?

"Harry..." Viktor started unsure of what to say.

"Viktor," Kira said, placing a soft kiss behind his ear. "Let's leave Potter to his brooding."

With one last look at Harry, Viktor stood up and walked with Kira to the door. "Good luck, Harry."

"Thanks, I guess," Harry said uncertainly.

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Girls' Hallway, Dec. 19th

With less than an hour before his Portkey took him home for the holidays, Harry knocked on Calypso's door. The door opened slightly, and Harry pushed it open and walked inside. He didn't see Calypso anywhere. Checking his watch, Harry walked over to Calypso's desk and put her birthday present down. He had hoped to give her his present personally, but he wasn't sure how much longer he would be able to stick around.

After his talk with Viktor and Kira, Harry had spent some time thinking about Calypso, and he decided that they were just wrong. Viktor, Kira, and most the student body could think what they wanted, but he didn't believe Calypso was spying on him, it was ridiculous. If she was spying on him, she wouldn't have told him that she was talking about him with her father. Besides, there would have been no point in her father really wanting to know about him. He wasn't the boy-who-lived, and Calypso had never, not once, really pushed for information about Nathan or his family.

Checking his watch, again, Harry began wondering just where Calypso could be. It was unlike her to leave her door unlocked if she was going to be out of the room for a while. Looking down at his present, he smiled slightly. Calypso had told him last year that she always thought it was wonderful how the ancient wizards and witches like Merlin, Morgana, Hector, and Circe had their own personal spell-books, which consisted of their lifetime works. The necessity of personal spell books and family Grimoires fell out of practice shortly after the establishment of Hogwarts and other wizarding schools when knowledge became more available to the masses. Not to mention the entire publication industry that arose, making selling books a very profitable occupation.

For her birthday, Harry had bought a blank leather bound journal from Flourish and Blotts and paid an enchanter to protect the book from

nearly all revealing charms and unlocking spells. It had cost him nearly six Galleons, but Harry felt it was money well spent. It was, after all, not just a birthday gift, but a Christmas gift as well.

Deciding that he probably would have to just leave the gift, Harry made to move the present someplace where she would see it when she walked in the room. Unfortunately, when he made to pick up the present, he knocked several pieces of parchment off of Calypso's desk. Bending down to pick them up, Harry's eyes drifted to a single piece of parchment with his name on the top of one of the papers.

Quickly glancing at the parchment, Harry saw what looked like a family tree with his name at the top and several of his ancestors stretching back several generations. Next to some of his ancestors' names were small scribbled notes. Under his grandfather's names was the word "Animagus", while other of his ancestors had "Seer", "Chief Warlock of Wizengamot", or "Order of Merlin" next to them. Below the family tree, Harry saw his name again and more scribbled notes. He was about to read the rest of the page when he heard the door open.

Putting the papers back on the desk, Harry turned just in time to see Calypso enter the room.

"Harry? What are you doing here? I thought you left?" she asked, clearly surprised.

Feeling the slightest bit apprehensive, Harry walked over and handed Calypso his small wrapped gift. "Harry birthday and happy Christmas."

Looking down at the small parcel and back up at Harry, Calypso asked, "Should I open it now or at Christmas?"

"It's up to you." Harry said hurriedly. "I'm running late. My parents are expecting me."

"Alright, I'll see you next term." As Harry made to leave the room Calypso called out, "Oh, Harry?"

"Yes?"

Calypso smiled brightly. "Happy Christmas, and thank you for the present."

"You're welcome," he said, leaving the room far more uncertain about Calypso than he had been before he entered.

Insider her room, Calypso carefully unwrapped the parcel Harry had given her. She removed the small book from the wrapping and couldn't keep the smile off her face as she ran her fingers over her name, which was etched in a flowing script on the cover. Opening the book, she read the small handwritten inscription from Harry on the first page.

After a few more minutes reading about her new personal spell-book, Calypso closed the book. Grinning to herself, she went over to her desk and found the piece of parchment with Harry's name on it. Dipping her quill in some ink, she scribbled yet another small note at the bottom of the page. Without a second thought, she carefully placed the parchment back into the drawer in her desk.

AN: Well this turned into a longer chapter than I anticipated. At around 15K words, I hope everyone enjoyed it.

Typical shout outs go to Stanzi as well as everyone over at Dark Lord Potter.

Chapter 9

Pushing Boundaries

Durmstrang, (Jan. 11th)...

It was an unhappy Harry Potter who returned to Durmstrang following the Christmas holiday. After finding out that Calypso had been looking up and recording information about both him and his family, Harry had gone home hoping for a very quiet and relaxing break. Instead, he found himself constantly at odds with Nathan, and his parents worried sick about what was happening at Hogwarts.

Not only had there been another attack, resulting in a Muggle-born Hufflepuff and a ghost having been Petrified by Slytherin's monster, but Nathan was the school's prime suspect to be the heir of Slytherin. Nathan, it seemed, had somehow managed to acquire the very rare and obscure talent of Parseltongue from the Dark Lord after Voldemort's killing curse failed.

According to Professor Dumbledore, who had personally taken the time to explain everything to Harry on the second day of the holiday, Nathan had discovered his Parseltongue ability while taking part in an extra-curricular dueling club run by Professors Snape and Lockhart, Hogwarts' newest Defense teacher. Draco Malfoy had Summoned a snake, and, after a mishap involving Professor Lockhart, Nathan had intervened to stop it from attacking the crowd. Unfortunately, the Muggle-born who Nathan had apparently stopped the snake from attacking was later victimized by Slytherin's monster, proving without a doubt to most the students that Nathan was the heir of Slytherin.

After Harry told Nathan that he didn't believe him to be a future Dark Lord because of some silly talent, it seemed like the holiday was going to bring the Potter family closer together than ever. All that had unraveled the moment that Harry decided it would be interesting to see Nathan talk to a snake. Nathan had promptly refused to ever use the talent, which Harry felt was completely ridiculous. There had been only six recorded Parseltongues in the last century, and very little was known about the ability besides rumor and conjecture. As far as Harry was concerned, his brother was wasting a rare magical talent by

refusing to use it. Nathan, however, felt the ability was a disturbing connection between him and the Dark Lord, and he resented it.

The difference of opinion about Nathan's new talent was never resolved during the holiday. It was simply ignored when another, larger, argument took its place. After a heated argument between the two brothers, Harry had attempted to change the subject and informed Nathan that he copied the instructions for Polyjuice Potion. The only catch was that Harry wanted to know what his brother was planning to do with it before he handed over the instructions. This resulted in Nathan explaining Hermione's idea about sneaking into the Slytherin common room to find out what Malfoy knew about the Chamber of Secrets.

Harry had instantly argued against the plan, pointing out several places where Nathan could not only get expelled, but arrested, and he refused to give the Polyjuice Potion instructions to his brother. Much to Harry's annoyance, however, Nathan, Hermione, and Ron had somehow gotten their hands on a book from the Restricted section of Hogwarts' library, and the potion was now nearing completion. Hermione was, according to Nathan, staying at Hogwarts over the break to ensure that it would be ready when they got back.

Nathan's desire to go through with the Polyjuice idea had led to the first ever duel between the two brothers. Harry had threatened to tell their parents about his brother's plan, and the two had ended up exchanging spells, which resulted in both boys getting grounded for the last week of the holiday. For Nathan that meant no Quidditch, while Harry had to do extra chores around the house.

Harry never did tell his parents about Nathan's idiotic plan to sneak into the Slytherin common room. After Nathan had hit him with a Jelly-Brain Jinx while he reading in the library, Harry had decided to just let his brother get expelled for attacking another student and using their hair in Polyjuice.

For the first time ever, Harry wanted to leave home and go back to Durmstrang. In fact, the only reason Harry stayed the entire length of the holiday and didn't return to school early was his mother's promise to help him with his Charms and Potions final projects. It had taken a

bit of convincing, but Harry had managed to demonstrate that he was good enough at Charms for his mother to teach him how to properly enchant an object.

While Harry wanted to build on his previous Charms project and enchant his room, he soon found that was unlikely to happen. Learning how to enchant was like going back to his first-ever Charms class and re-learning how to do everything. A charm to make a teacup dance was simple enough, but to enchant the same teacup to permanently dance required a lot more effort.

By the end of the break, Harry had succeeded in enchanting a small butterknife to repel water, but that was all. When he realized that he wouldn't be doing any large-scale enchantments to his room any time soon, Harry had decided to make his final project a single small object that had many enchantments on it. Since he already knew how to enchant a knife to repel water, he made a list of other enchantments he could add to a knife.

When he was younger, Harry had loved reading about medieval wizards who enchanted swords for Muggle knights, and he went back to those stories to find ideas. Eventually, Harry decided he would order a small dagger and enchant it to be unbreakable, repel water, and have lasting sharpness, with an added self-cleaning charm. If he could make it work, the dagger would be a very impressive final project, and would easily put him in the running for the mastery award for Charms again.

For his final project in Potions, Harry decided to taunt his brother a little. After looking at the instructions for Polyjuice Potion one night, Harry decided to take a chance at brewing the potion for his final project. While his mother had been initially skeptical of his ability to brew a N.E.W.T-level potion, Harry eventually won her over by pointing out that the most difficult part of the potion was making sure that the ingredients were picked at the right time, and that it did not require any complex stirring techniques or especially rare and expensive ingredients.

Harry had enjoyed sitting at the diner table as he talked about the potion with his parents while Nathan stewed. At one point near the

end of the break, their mother had said how proud she was of Harry for trying to learn such a complicated brew at such a young age. Harry was almost certain that Nathan was going to blurt out that he too was making the potion, but he managed to hold his tongue and instead gave Harry the cold shoulder for the rest of the break.

Another thing Harry was upset about was that he didn't get a chance to ask his brother's advice about Calypso during the break. Between the constant arguments with Nathan, working on his final projects, and not wanting to reveal Calypso's identity to his parents, Harry managed to constantly find excuses to not bring up his friend's suspicious activities to anyone in his family. In retrospect, Harry knew he should have. If Calypso was making notes about his family, Harry knew his parents or uncles should have been informed.

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A Very Happy Return

Harry's Room, Durmstrang Jan 11th

Opening the door to his room, Harry looked at his already magically expanded room in surprise. In his rush to leave Durmstrang over the Christmas holidays, he had obviously forgotten to remove the expansion charm he placed upon his receptacle. The fact that the receptacle actually managed to continue working throughout the entire Christmas holidays was rather shocking and it gave Harry a great sense of accomplishment. Clearly, all the practice he did over the summer had paid off.

Placing his trunk at the foot of his bed, Harry went to his desk, removed his older receptacle, and placed it in his bag. After quickly inspecting his room, Harry didn't think anything would be irreparably damaged in case the receptacle were to fail suddenly, resulting in the space expansion charm being canceled. Walking back outside Harry made his way back down the boy's hallway and down the main staircase. Once on the second floor, he quickly found his way to Professor Kosarev's office and knocked patiently on the door.

"Come." The sharp voice of Kosarev commanded, prompting Harry to turn the handle and open the door.

"Ah, Mr. Potter," Kosarev said pleasantly, a smile gracing his face. "Welcome back. I trust you had a pleasant holiday?"

Stepping forward and closing the door behind him, Harry couldn't help but marvel at his professor's office. The room almost felt alive with the amount of magic that was actively taking place. Just slightly to the right of Kosarev's desk, two enchanted suits of armor were casually sitting in chairs playing a game of wizards chess as an enchanted train flew around the room. As soon as he entered the room, a plush chair seemed to move of its own accord away from the wall and situated itself directly in front of the professor's desk.

Sitting in the chair, Harry looked up when the flying train's horn blew, and his eyes immediately drifted to a new addition to the room. Floating around an impressive chandelier in the center of the professor's vaulted ceiling was a startling rendition of the solar system. At first glance Harry thought the planets were simply stationary, but as he continued to watch them, he noticed they were in fact moving very slowly.

"I see you're fond of my latest enchantment," Kosarev commented lightly. "It took quite a while to figure out how to make the planets mimic their actual counterparts rotation and movements around the sun, but, fortunately, I found myself with some free time over the holiday."

Reminding himself that he was in the professor's office for a reason, Harry forcibly turned his eyes away from the impressive enchantment. "Well, sir, I just returned from England, and it appears I forgot to remove the space enhancement spell from my receptacle before I left Durmstrang in December."

"Ah," Kosarev said knowingly, "and what is the damage to your room?"

"Actually, none sir," Harry said, a slight smile on his face. "The receptacle managed last throughout the entire holiday."

Slightly surprised, Kosarev asked, "Do you have the receptacle with you by any chance?"

"I do sir." Harry reached into his bag, carefully removed the quill, and placed it on Kosarev's desk.

Kosarev held the quill in his hand, looking intently at the object. After a few moments, he said, "I would say this receptacle will last another eight to ten days Mr. Potter. Still, this is a most impressive improvement."

"How do you do that?" Harry asked curiously

The Charms Professor simply raised a curious eyebrow, inviting his student to elaborate.

"How do you always know how much magic is left in the receptacle? You're always so accurate. The revealing spell my mother taught me will only show in vague terms how much magic an object contains."

"Yes, Specialis Revelio can be a most frustrating spell. Oh, it has its uses I suppose, but it's not exactly ideal."

"So, what is it that you do?" Harry pressed. "What spell is it?"

"Harry, there is so much more to magic than spells and incantations," Kosarev said authoritatively. "If you learn nothing more from me at your time at Durmstrang, remember that. What I do is magic at a much deeper level. You see, a truly talented wizard can reach out with their senses and feel the lingering hints of magic. With enough practice, they can interpret and manipulate these traces in a number of ways. So while I held your receptacle, I did my best to sense the magic that emanated from the object. From my familiarity with how to create a receptacle, I can give you a fairly accurate estimate of how long your spell will remain intact."

"That's incredible," Harry said in awe. "I've never even heard of magic like that. When will we learn how to sense magic? Is there a book on it that I should consider reading first?"

"Harry, your enthusiasm is, as always, refreshing." Kosarev chuckled. "Unfortunately, I will not be teaching you this magic." Before Harry could open his mouth to protest, Kosarev held up a hand, indicating he was not done speaking. "This is magic far beyond what we expect even our seventh years to comprehend Harry. It does not belong to any specific field, and there is no real book, wand movement, or potion that can help you learn it."

"So how did you learn it?" Harry asked.

"Perhaps I am explaining this wrong. This isn't an ability that is learned, Harry, yet it's not a magical talent, like a Seer's clairvoyance. I believe anyone can achieve this connection with magic, if only they push themselves to discover it. It is, of course, still quite difficult to achieve, and it requires the ability to clearly discern ones own magic, as well as the experience to understand and command various types of magic at a high level. Tell me, Harry, what do both of those requirement have in common?"

Taken slightly aback, Harry said, "Err, I'm not exactly sure, sir."

"Time, Harry," Kosarev provided. "It takes time. Time that often goes well beyond the seven years of training at a magical school. Did you know, Harry, that it use to be tradition for exceptional wizards to not take jobs after they graduate?"

"No," Harry said, slightly surprised. "Why not?"

"It was seen as a waste of their talent. Why should a student with great potential be forced into a menial job in government. Why, even an Auror or Healer program would be too restrictive. One hundred years ago, it was common place for the top students of the day to ignore work and go travel instead. It was expected that the best would want to see the magical cultures of other nations, to seek out forgotten lore or uncommon magic. Only after they spent time abroad would the person come home and seek a job or a family."

"So...what changed?" Harry asked curiously.

Kosarev scowled. "The Ministries grew tired of watching the best and brightest leave. There was always the chance that the witch or wizard might not ever return from their travels. Should they settle in another country, the ministry would lose the benefits of his or her talent. Of course the subsequent rise of Grindelwald didn't help matters. Everyone knew Grindelwald traveled extensively following his expulsion from Durmstrang. It is now commonly believed that during his travels Grindelwald search for rare dark knowledge and crafted his plans for domination. Since then, traveling abroad for 'self study' has had a somewhat negative connotation."

"Oh," Harry said, frowning somewhat. "So I won't be learning how to sense magic anytime soon then."

Laughing slightly, Kosarev said, "You are a long way away from such magic Harry, but, if you continue improving, it is certainly not out of your reach."

"When do you think I'll be ready?" Harry couldn't help but ask.

"I will make you a deal Harry. You are on pace to finish your Charms class at the end of your fifth year. Typically, students who finish a classes early are tasked with a period of self study to continue expanding their knowledge of the class. Should you actually manage to complete your Charms classes early, I will do my best to teach you how to sense magic. As I said, I don't believe the magic can be taught, but I will do my best to guide you. Now, not to push you out, but I do have some last minute lesson plan adjustments I need to make."

"I understand. Thank you sir," Harry said, placing his old receptacle back in his bag and leaving the room.

As he walked down the boys' hallway towards his room, Harry decided to drop by and visit with Viktor before the feast. Reaching his friend's door, Harry was about to twist the doorknob and walk inside when he remembered to double checked the doorknob's color. Seeing that it wasn't red, he opened the door and casually walked inside the room, only to be treated to the sight of Kira viciously

snogging Viktor against a wall. Fortunately, this time they were both fully clothed.

Harry's rather un-masculine 'eep' when he saw the two alerted Kira and Viktor to his presence.

Before Kira could so much as say a word, Harry blurted out, "It wasn't red. I checked!"

This seemed to give Kira a moment's pause as she leveled her wand at him. "They say once is an accident, Potter."

"And twice is still just a coincidence," Viktor reminded his temperamental girlfriend as he guided her wand back down to her side.

Kira growled as she pocketed her wand. "Fine. But the next time you interrupt us, Potter..."

"Err," Harry said uncomfortably, "I could come back, or rather, I'll see you at the feast, Viktor."

"Don't bother leaving Potter, the mood is ruined," Kira grumbled. "Viktor, you need to learn some better locking charms."

"Actually the door was unlocked," Harry said before immediately falling silent under Kira's rather pointed glare.

Viktor laughed. "Well, to be fair, Kira, you did spring the snogging on me rather suddenly."

"Suddenly!" she exclaimed. "You tell me that you're going to be starting for the Bulgarian National team and I'm, what? Supposed to just say congratulations and shake your hand? You should have expected the snog of your life."

"You're going to be starting for Bulgaria! How? When did this happen?" Harry asked quickly.

Viktor gestured to an open chair, inviting Harry to sit down. "Well, each national team squad is only allowed to keep one Seeker on their roster. It's a rule that was put in place to make the game fair. If a team has great Chasers or Beaters, but a lousy Seeker, they can aim to knock out the opponent's Seeker and not have to worry about losing because of the Snitch. Well, Bulgaria's Seeker was knocked out during a World Cup qualifying game against Romania over the break. At first they thought it was a slightly damaged lumbar vertebra, which would have kept him out for only a week or two. After they got him to the hospital, though, it turned out that there was some major muscle degeneration and ligament damage around his spine, and if he was to take another Bludger to the back, he would likely be paralyzed."

"And you're going to taking his spot," Harry said in astonishment. "What about that Peja guy? You said the coaches liked him more than you, and he should be fully recovered from when you plowed him during the summer."

"Ah, yes, Peja. Well, it seems that dear Peja is still recovering from the emotional trauma of smashing headfirst into the pitch at full speed. He is scared to push his broom to its limits, and he refuses to dive for the Snitch. The coaches had to make a decision. It was either take me, or reshuffle the entire lineup and move one of the team's Chasers to Seeker. After I beat the Chaser to the Snitch seven straight times in my tryout, the coaches all agreed that Bulgaria would have a better chance of winning with me as Seeker."

"Wow, congratulations, Viktor. When is your first game, and how are you going to be getting to practice?"

"My first game will be against Germany in a little over a month, and the Highmaster has been kind enough to give me a reusable Portkey, which will let me bypass Durmstrang's wards to get to practice," Viktor explained with a huge smile on his face.

"Have you told anyone else?"

"Just me," Kira said, wrapping her arm around Viktor possessively, "and you saw what my reaction to the news was."

Harry blushed. "Um, yeah, it was..."

"Enthusiastic?" Viktor offered with a grin.

"Exactly," Harry agreed immediately.

"Well, as much fun as this is, I should be leaving to get changed for the feast. I'll be back in a little while, Viktor," Kira said, planting a kiss on his mouth before departing his room.

"I really don't get her," Harry said shaking his head.

"Who? Kira?"

"Yeah, one minute she's civil and the next she's sending a curse at me."

"She's just passionate. Plus, she's a girl," Viktor said as if that explained everything. When he saw the confusion on Harry's face, Viktor smiled. "You'll learn someday that girls can be rather prone to mood swings."

Harry looked at his friend in confusion before giving up and shrugging his shoulders "If you say so, Viktor."

"Trust me, Harry," Viktor smirked. "The benefits of a good girlfriend far outweigh any negative aspects. Now, speaking of girls, what have you decided to do about Calypso?"

"I honestly have no idea what I'm going to do," Harry muttered. "My Christmas was bad enough without thinking about Calypso."

"What happened?"

"I really don't want to talk about it right now Viktor," Harry said exasperatedly. "As far as Calypso goes, I know she's taking notes on me and my family, but I can't figure out why. If it was just stuff about me or my brother, then I'd be more concerned, but I don't understand

why she would be interested in why my great-great uncle won the Order of Merlin for Research in experimental charms."

"It is strange," Viktor agreed. "Obviously, you could confront her about it, but you still don't know why Calypso is looking at parts of your family history, and it could easily turn out to be nothing. Of course, another option would be for you to simply stop being friends with her—"

"No," Harry said before hesitantly adding, "It's like you said, I don't know what she's doing. It could be nothing."

Viktor looked less than pleased at his friend's adamant refusal. "Very well. I suppose you should simply act as normal as possible when around her then, but keep your guard up. I suppose it all depends on if you think you can trust her, Harry."

"Do you think I can trust her?"

"I think you've shown a great deal of trust in her thus far, Harry. The decision is yours and yours alone," Viktor said firmly. "I won't tell you what to do here, but if it were me...no. I would not trust her."

"I'm going to trust her...at least until I can get some answers."

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A Challenge Accepted
Main Hall, Jan. 25th

Calypso and Harry took a seat at their usual table for lunch in the Main Hall. While Harry had done his best to act normally around Calypso, it was a constant struggle not to demand an answer from her about the parchment in her room.

"I can't believe you're really going to try to brew Polyjuice Potion for your final project," Calypso said, sounding impressed. "I didn't even know you were researching it."

"Yeah, ever since you mentioned it as something to use for our Animagus study I've been thinking about it," Harry lied.

Calypso gave him an odd look before smiling slightly. "What did Professor Kral say when you told him?"

"He was skeptical that it could be done by a second year, but he did say that if I pulled it off I would be getting the Master award for his third year class. He gave me a private lab usually reserved for upper students working on long term brews and warned me not to damage the room. I'm actually hoping I can finish the Potion in the next month or two so I can turn my project in early. I don't want to have to worry about running back and adding an ingredient to the potion while I'm trying to make sure all my other projects are done at the end of the year."

"I wonder what the record for Mastery awards in a single year is," Calypso pondered.

"It's five," Viktor said, announcing his arrival with a slight scowl, "Grindelwald achieved it in his fifth year."

There was a pause before Calypso said, "You should try to beat it, Harry."

Harry choked on a piece of ham and looked incredulously at Calypso. "Calypso, that record has been standing for almost a century."

"So? I think you can do it. If you can make the Polyjuice, that will earn you the mastery for Potions. Didn't you say your mother started teaching you how to enchant this Christmas?"

Harry nodded, slightly confused as to when he mentioned that to Calypso. "Err, yeah, I want to do a multiple enchantment for my charms project. I managed to enchant a butter-knife to be water proof over the break. I thought expanding on that would be interesting."

Calypso and Viktor shared a look of disbelief. "So you're actually working on a multiple enchantment? There is no way anyone is going to beat that project. I have an idea for what you could do for your

Dark Arts project. It would definitely impress my father enough to get you the Mastery award. What are you planning on doing for Transfiguration, Herbology, and Spell Creation?"

"Err, well for Herbology I was just going to harvest the ingredients for Polyjuice. It's not amazing, but Professor Guiles said he would pass me if I could gather all the ingredients myself and the potion was brewed correctly. I have an interesting idea for Spell Creation, but I'm probably going to need some help making it work," Harry admitted.

"Kira will help you with that," Victor said with a gleam in his eyes. "Now, what will you be doing for Transfiguration?"

Harry rubbed his temples in frustration. From the look on Calypso and Viktor's faces, they were serious about this. "I don't know what I'm going to do for Transfiguration, and before you say it, no, there is no way I'm going to be able to do the Animagus transformation by the end of term."

"What have you been working on the most this year in Transfiguration?" Calypso asked.

"Mostly Inanimate to Animate transfiguring," Viktor answered, cutting Harry off and speaking directly to Calypso. "It is a lot of turning pillows into Porcupines. We are also supposed to spend a lot of time focusing on more advanced Switching Spells this term."

"Any chance you could do a large-scale Inanimate to Animate transfiguration? Maybe turn your desk into a large animal?" Calypso asked.

"No way," Harry said sharply. "if I messed up that kind of spell..."

"Alright, if we can find a good transfiguration project for you, that would give you the Master rank in Charms, Potions, Dark Arts, Spell Creation, and Transfiguration," Calypso pointed out. "You'd be tied with Grindelwald. Can you not think of a more advanced Herbology project?"

"He doesn't have to have a more advanced Herbology project." A large grin spread across Viktor's face. "You are forgetting a subject, Rosier."

"What?"

"History. The top scorer on the final exam is given the rank of Master. If Harry can get the top score, that will give him six Master rankings."

Calypso smiled. "Well, Harry, I hope you didn't plan on joining any clubs or playing Quidditch this term because you're going to be rather busy."

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Harry's Room, Feb. 1st

Dear Harry,

You were right. Polyjuice was a bad idea.

Nathan

Harry had been staring at the short missive from his brother for the last five minutes, his mind a whirlwind of thoughts about what could have happened.

After finding out why his brother was so interested in Polyjuice Potion over the holidays, Harry had repeatedly insulted his brother's plan. The fact that his brother wanted to attack three students, use them as potions ingredients, and then break into the Slytherin common room to basically interrogate another student was beyond idiotic. He was tempted on more than one occasion to tell his parents about his brother's plan, but, after Nathan actually tried to hex him, Harry had decided to just let his brother screw up the Potion and get in trouble. It wasn't likely that Nathan's plan would ever work.

None-the-less, Harry couldn't overlook Nathan trying to hex him, and even if he had no intention of telling on his brother, Nathan didn't know that.

After looking at the instructions for Polyjuice Potion one night, Harry spoke to his mother about potentially brewing the potion as his end of the year project at diner. The look of absolute horror and shock on Nathan's face when Harry sat across the table discussing the potion was hilarious. Even more so, however, was when their mother had said how proud she was of Harry for trying to learn such a complicated brew at such a young age.

While his mother had been initially skeptical of his ability to brew a N.E.W.T-level potion, Harry eventually won her over by pointing out that the most difficult part of the potion was making sure that the ingredients were picked and added at exactly the right time, and that it did not require any complex stirring techniques. Harry was almost positive that Nathan was going to blurt out that he too was making the potion, but, somehow, his brother managed to hold his tongue.

Still, Harry hadn't gotten a letter from his mother or father telling him that Nathan was going to be suspended, expelled, or arrested, so clearly Nathan wasn't in too much trouble.

Dipping his quill in some ink, Harry prepared a letter, wondering just what Nathan and his friends had done now.

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The Meeting

Professor Rosier's Office, Feb 13th

The soft knocking on his door caused Romulus Rosier to look up from the small stack of essays on his desk. With a casual flick of his wand, the door opened and Calypso stepped into the room. "Take a seat." Romulus easily conjured a somewhat uncomfortable looking straight back chair directly in front of his desk. He then waved his wand at the stack of essays, causing them to fly into an open desk door.

"You wanted to speak with me father?" Calypso asked.

To anyone else the question would have sounded respectful and calm, but Romulus caught the slight hint of apprehension in his daughter's voice. "Tell me Calypso, how is your research into the Potter family coming along?"

"Very well," she said, sounding more confident before faltering somewhat, "do you want to see everything now?"

Romulus narrowed his eyes, easily sensing his daughter's discomfort. "No, I'm merely interested in seeing what you've uncovered about Nathan Potter."

"Nathan Potter is the Boy Who Liv—"

Calypso immediately stopped when she found her voice silenced. Looking up at her father, she saw him looking at her with a mix of annoyance and amusement. "When I ask you for information, I am not asking for what everyone already knows Calypso." Removing the silencing charm, Romulus said, "Now, try again."

"Harry doesn't like to talk about his brother," Calypso said hesitantly. "I know that his brother's fame was somewhat involved in his transferring to Durmstrang, so I've done my best not to press Harry about him."

"Surely, you have something," Romulus said patronizingly.

"His brother was involved with something recently at Hogwarts. I'm not sure what, but I overheard Harry muttering about idiots and questioning what his brother was thinking."

"Magical abilities?" Romulus prompted.

"None that I'm aware of. He survived the killing curse, but besides that—"

Romulus slammed his fist down on his desk, an angry expression now on his face. "None! None at all?" Reaching into his robes, he withdrew a letter and said, "From your uncle Lucius: As I'm sure you are aware by now, Nathan Potter has revealed himself to be a

parseltongue." Calypso's eyes widened. Dropping the letter on his desk, Romulus reached into a drawer and pulled out a old copy of the Daily Prophet. Calypso physically winced at the headline proclaiming Nathan Potter a parselmouth.

"I-I—"

"I do not want to hear excuses," Romulus said calmly, his tone underlying the withering glare he was giving his daughter. "I should not be finding out information about Nathan Potter from your uncle Lucius. Nor should I need it confirmed by a back issue of this rag of a newspaper. This rather colossal failure on your part makes me question whether you're even taking this seriously."

"No," Calypso said hurriedly, "no, father I am. I swear it. I-I'm just focusing more on Harry than his brother. Even uncle Lucius said Nathan Potter has so far shown to be of no real talent."

"I'm growing tired of this Calypso. You've made your position quite clear in the past. Now I find that you're not even doing a good job at this. I expect better daughter. From now on, I want updates twice a month until the end of the term, and I suggest you find out why your friend didn't care to mention that his brother possesses one of the rarest magical talents in the wizarding world."

"Yes father." Calypso said, an unreadable expression on her face.

"Dismissed."

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Testing 1,2,3

Kira's Room, March 4th

"I swear, Potter, this is the last time I help you," Kira snapped. "I don't care how much Viktor begs, it's just not worth it!"

Ignoring Kira's complaining, Harry looked at the large piece of parchment in front of him. All over the page were scribbled notes and

theories about Harry's Spell Creation project. "I think it should work this time."

"That's what you said last time, and the time before that."

"Well, maybe, if you would help instead of just pointed out things I was doing wrong and making fun of me, I would have finished it sooner," Harry argued.

"Excuse me? This is your project, Potter! I'm helping you out of the goodness of my heart!"

Harry didn't believe that for a minute. Kira was only helping because of their deal with the Animagus transformation.

"The mistake was thinking we could just increase the brightness of the lumos spell," Harry said, making a few notes at the bottom of the parchment. "Instead we should have looked at other amplification spells like sonorus and work backwards from that."

"Which is what I said a month ago," Kira pointed out.

"Fine. You were right. Happy?" Harry asked, starting to get annoyed at Kira's attitude. If she wasn't one of the best students at spell creation in the school, Harry would have stopped asking for her advice a long time ago.

"Yes, now let's see it."

Drawing his wand, Harry started the movement for a simple lumos, but incorporated an upward slash and ended up pointing his wand straight up before saying, "Caecus."

Instead of a small light appearing from the tip of his wand, a blinding flash of white light encompassed the entire room for a brief moment before vanishing a second later. Kira screamed and fell to the ground rubbing her eyes. Harry stumbled backwards, blinded by his own spell.

"Potter, you idiot! I can't see!"

"Neither can I," Harry said, shocked that the spell had worked so well. He had learned the blindness curse in his Dark Arts class just prior to the end of the fall term, and he couldn't help but think that there had to be an easier way to blind your opponent than hitting them with a curse. That's when the idea came to him to increase the power of the lumos charm to disable your opponent. What had started out as a simple idea had ballooned into a much more difficult project when he realized that the lighting charm couldn't generate the amount of power to temporarily incapacitate anyone. After going to Kira for help, he had finally succeeded in creating the spell.

Unfortunately, it appeared that a side effect of casting the spell was that it blinded both the caster and the opponent. Harry would have to remember to close his eyes when using this spell in a duel. Still, it was a good way to throw your opponent off. Since it wasn't a curse, jinx, or hex, the spell couldn't be blocked by a shield or dodged, forcing your opponent to almost certainly suffer temporary blindness.

After almost a minute of seeing only white spots, Harry's vision slowly began to come back. The first thing he saw was Kira angrily pointing her wand at him from across the room. Her eyes were bloodshot and tears were flowing down her face. A silent stupefy from Kira's wand caused Harry to leap out of the way.

"Get out! Get out now!" Kira snarled, sending another curse and forcing Harry out of her room.

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A Legend Is Born

Harry's Room, March 7th

Harry tuned his wizard wireless radio to the correct station, and waited impatiently for the broadcast to start. Viktor would be playing in his first ever National team game tonight in Berlin against the heavily favored Germans. Viktor had explained how his team needed to win two out of their last three games to clinch a second place finish behind the Germans, and qualify for the World Cup. Unfortunately,

the last three games were against some of the top teams in central and eastern Europe, all of who were chomping at the bit to usurp the Bulgarians' second place spot. After the first place Germans, the Bulgarians would play at home against the Lithuanians, and finish up on the road against the Poles, who were currently in third place.

The international Quidditch community had all but dismissed Bulgaria's chances to make it to the World Cup, regardless of the fact that they were still narrowly holding onto their second place spot. Losing their starting Seeker and replacing him with a sixteen year old boy, who was still in school and had only played in five Junior National league matches, was seen as a sign that the Bulgarian coaching squad was admitting defeat. Harry had tried to show his support of Viktor by placing a small five-Galleon wager with Gringotts Prague. He had later found out that because of the heavy beating on Germany, the Goblins had given him 15-1 odds against Viktor catching the snitch and the Bulgarians winning.

"And we now switch you over to our friends in Berlin, who will tonight attempt to clinch a first place finish in Group B of the European World Cup Qualifier against the decimated Bulgarian squad! Romp those Bulgarians boys! Deutschland über alles!" The German radio host shouted enthusiastically as the station switched over to the match.

While the wireless was capable of picking up the Bulgarian broadcast of the match, Harry didn't speak Bulgarian, and so was stuck listening to the German broadcast. Viktor had offered to teach him the most common Bulgarian dialect of Balgàrtski, and Harry was contemplating learning it just so that he could listen to his friend's matches.

"Welcome, Quidditch fans," an enthusiastic voice shouted, "to tonight's match between Germany and Bulgaria! I'm your announcer, Hans Klein, and with me in the booth, as always, is the legendary German Beater Marcus Werden. Marcus! It's good to see you again my friend."

"You as well, Hans."

"Now Marcus, correct me if I'm wrong, but tonight's match seems to have lost a bit of its luster. What should have been the meeting of the

top two teams in this group is now considered by everyone to be an easy victory for the Germans."

"You're not wrong there, Hans. The Bulgarians are in some serious trouble. Alonzo Lom's retirement due to injury has left the Bulgarians reliant upon a sixteen year old boy to carry them into the World Cup. After looking at Bulgaria's remaining schedule, I just don't see that happening. The Poles and the Lithuanians are both top-notch squads, and, well, I don't think I need to tell you that this German team is especially dangerous."

"Oh no, you certainly don't, Marcus. Herrmann is playing at the absolute top of his game, and the rest of the squad hasn't been too shabby either."

"Not too shabby? That's an understatement if I've ever heard one. Our Beaters are first in Bludger connections, while our Chasers are second in the group in scoring. This German squad is without a doubt poised for a deep run in the World Cup!"

Harry heard the door to his room open, and he turned to see Calypso walking in carrying a book.

"Listening to Krum's match?"

"Yeah, it doesn't sound like anyone is giving Bulgaria much of a chance."

"I heard you placed a bet with the Goblins. Do you really think Viktor is going to win?" Calypso asked curiously.

Harry shrugged. "It was only a few galleons, and I certainly hope that Viktor wins. Besides, I think it did Viktor some good to know that someone believed he could win. Even his own country's media have been denouncing the move to put him at Seeker. They all think the coaches have given up on winning the cup, and are just looking to give Viktor some experience at the highest level."

"Well, how would you feel if England decided to put a fifth-year Hogwarts student on their national team squad?"

"Point taken," Harry conceded.

"And it appears like the referee is ready to start the match!" Marcus Werden said excitedly, drawing Harry and Calypso's conversation to a close.

"For those of you Bulgarian fans, you have my sympathies," Hans chuckled. "Just looking at the tiny figure of the Bulgarian Seeker...what's the boy's name again, Marcus?"

"Krupt? No, Krum."

"Yes, well. While the young man has a decent build for a Seeker, he is still just a boy. I do hope the Bulgarian's aren't ruining a good young talent by throwing him to the wolves too early. It's always a shame when that happens."

"Agreed, Marcus. And it looks like the referee is done talking to the captains, and, yes, the Snitch and Bludgers have been released! The Quaffle is in the air as well, and the players are off! The Quaffle is immediately taken by the Bulgarian Chaser Dimitrov. He passes to fellow Chaser Levski, who does an inverted sloth grip roll to narrowly avoid a Bludger. Levski passes to... intercepted by Schlusell, and the German's are countering.

"Schlusell to Vogel, Vogel passes back to Schlusell. Schlusell shoots! And it's saved by Bulgarian Keeper Zograf, who passes the Quaffle off to Ivanova."

"A good solid start to the match with both Chaser teams testing each other," Marcus pointed out. "However, unless the Bulgarian Chasers are somehow able to take over this game, I just don't see them having a chance at winning."

"Very true, but oh, my! What are the Seekers doing? Ladies and gentlemen, both Seekers have entered into a steep dive! I think they've seen the Snitch! Herrmann is using his superior size to shield the Bulgarian Seeker, but Krum has managed to pull alongside him! They both have their hands extended... and the Snitch changes

directions! Krum executes a perfect corkscrew reverse and... I don't believe it! Krum catches the snitch in the third minute! Bulgaria wins 150 to nil."

"YES!" Harry jumped up and pumped his fist. "He did it! I knew he could win!"

"Unbelievable," Calypso said, shaking her head. "So how much money did you just make?"

Harry's eyes widened. "Err... wow."

"That much, huh?" Calypso smirked. "I'd write a letter to the Goblins if I were you. Have them put the money in a new vault at Gringotts Prague. Unless you want your parents to find out that you've been gambling?"

Harry nodded his head and started writing out a note to Gringotts Prague with instructions to open a new vault and place his winnings inside it.

"Oh, Harry?"

"Yes?"

"I've got an idea for your transfiguration project."

"Really?" Harry asked interestedly.

"I know you said that you won't be able to use the Animagus transformation," Calypso said, "but you've gotten pretty good at self-transfiguration this year. What if you—"

"Calypso," Harry interrupted, "if you're suggesting I try transfiguring myself or someone else, it's not going to happen."

"Why not?" Calypso protested. "You're able to transfigure large appendages almost perfectly. The last time we practiced, I didn't feel any hint of pain when you transfigured both my arms. The fact that

you've managed to do some self-transfiguration as well is amazing! If I'm lucky, I'll be able to try transfiguring my hand by the end of term!"

"Honestly Calypso, I might be able to do a pretty interesting human transfiguration project." Before Calypso could say anything, Harry continued, "But only if I dedicated every spare moment to transfiguration. I'm still working on my Charms project, my Polyjuice Potion isn't done, and you know how far I still need to go on my Dark Arts project. If I'm actually going to have a shot at beating Grindelwald, I can't focus all my attention on transfiguration."

"Well do you have any ideas?" Calypso asked. "You need to start working on something!"

Harry looked conflicted for a moment as he glanced over at his desk.

"You do!" Calypso said excitedly. "I can tell. Well, what is it Harry?"

"It's nothing," Harry said evasively. "Just an idea that came to me after something Roseburg said about switching spells."

"Well let's hear it," Calypso pressed.

"Alright, you're going to think it sounds crazy, but..."

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How to make a Bider

Durmstrang, March 22nd

"And you're sure that this wouldn't be illegal?" Harry asked. "Did you double check the ban on experimental breeding?"

"Stop second guessing yourself Harry," Calypso said impatiently. "Your idea is brilliant and you aren't breeding anything, so it's not against the law."

Harry grinned and looked down at the creatures he and Calypso had spent the last few days catching on the Durmstrang grounds. After he

had explained his plan, Calypso had refused to let him ignore the idea. After double checking every source he could find, and, with his friend pushing him to experiment, Harry's curiosity about what would happen eventually got the better of him.

His idea was a direct challenge to one of the longest standing rules governing switching spells. Everyone, from the greatest master of transfiguration to the stupidest third year student, knew that switching spells between living and nonliving things didn't work, it was one of the first things that was taught about them. Professor Rosemburg explained it as nonliving objects lacking a certain 'spark of life,' which resulted in switching spells between living and nonliving objects not being possible.

While Harry believed that the rule was fundamentally correct, he remembered during his first year how a botched enchantment had turned one of the first floor storage closets into a mouth, which attempted to eat everything inside of it. The closet wasn't alive, but it certainly had living properties, such as the desire for food. For Harry, that raised an interesting question. If something had a property of being alive, was it actually alive?

In order to test that, he had done his best to remember exactly what he did wrong when first casting the enchantment on the closet. Eventually, he was able to successfully mess up an enchantment on his pillow, causing it to try and eat anyone who laid their head on it. His plan was to transfigure the pillow into a small animal, and then use switching spells to switch the limbs from living animals with the transfigured animal. According to all literature, a transfigured animal from a nonliving object was still considered a nonliving object, and so a switching spell between the two creatures shouldn't work.

After carefully searching in the library, Harry and Calypso discovered that no one had ever tried to purposefully botch an enchantment, transfigure the result, and then test it against switching spells, though they could easily understand why. Enchanting was a difficult skill to master, and as you grew more experienced at it, you trained yourself to instinctively avoid those kind of dangerous mistakes. No experienced enchanter would ever think of purposefully screwing up

an enchantment, especially not to test it against a rock solid transfiguration theory.

Since there was no literature about what would happen, Harry felt that if he could somehow demonstrate it was possible to use a switching spell between living and nonliving things, Rosemburg would award him the Master rank for pioneering a new discovery in Transfiguration.

"Alright, turn the pillow into a rabbit," Calypso said, clearly excited about what was about to happen.

Harry cast the spell, and a moment later the pillow had become a small fluffy white rabbit.

"What do you think we should do now?"

"Let's start small," Harry said. "We'll switch the rabbit's two large front teeth with the snake's two fangs."

Calypso levitated the petrified snake they had caught the day before next to the rabbit, and Harry cast an immobilus charm on the rabbit to stop it from running away from a perceived threat. Not knowing what to expect, Harry performed a textbook switching spell on the rabbit and snake's teeth. The large front teeth of the white bunny were instantly replaced by the two sharp fangs of the Milos Viper.

"It worked!" Calypso said excitedly. "I wonder what would happen if you turned the rabbit back into a pillow right now?"

"I don't know." Harry had considered doing just that after he saw the switching spell worked, but something else had caught his attention. "Does the rabbit seem different to you?"

"You mean besides the two fangs?"

"Yes," Harry said slowly, "it seems more... menacing."

"It does have fangs now, Potter, of course it's going to look more menacing," Calypso replied. "Now, try to switch something else. Let's

see if a transfigured animal can have multiple limbs switched with a living creature."

"Okay," Harry said, switching the rabbit's four legs with the eight legs of a small wolf spider. Harry then cast an engorgement charm on the legs so they could easily support the weight of a rabbit.

"That's really disturbing," Harry said looking at the small rabbit/spider/snake.

"I don't know what's stranger to look at, a rabbit with spider legs or a spider with rabbit legs. I wonder if the rabbit can actually use the new limbs? Let's unfreeze it and find out."

"Calypso, I don't think that's a good ide—"

"Finite."

Harry watched as the bastardized creature was released from the Immobolus charm and immediately charged at Calypso. The creature opened its mouth, exposing the fangs dripping with viper venom. Calypso immediately cast a severing curse, but the strange magical construct dodged out of the way and quickly began climbing one of the walls.

"Kill it," Harry snapped as the creature hissed at them from the wall.

"That is not how a rabbit is supposed to act," Calypso commented as the creature began angrily circling them on the wall and ceiling.

Before the creature could decide to attack again, Harry cast the counter-transfiguration, causing the rabbit's body to be replaced by a white fluffy pillow. Much to Harry's astonishment though, the spider's legs continued to move the white pillow body with two protruding fangs around the room.

"Have you ever seen anything like that?" Calypso asked in disbelief.

"No," Harry said in astonishment. "But it sort of makes sense. A transfigured animal takes on the characteristics of the creature you transfigure it into, and by switching parts of different animals..."

"We gave the transfigured rabbit the instincts of both a spider and a snake, which overpowered the instincts of the rabbit," Calypso realized. "But... how is it still alive?"

Harry glanced down at the two animals they had used as test subjects. The spider seemed to be spasming in agony as its legs had been replaced with a fluffy piece of pillow. The snake's eyes had glazed over, having choked to death, when the rabbit's teeth had gone back to being part of the pillow. Hearing two soft drops, Harry turned around and saw that the viper's teeth had fallen off the pillow and landed on the floor. "Calypso, kill the spider." Harry said curiously.

Pointing her wand at the struggling wolf spider, Calypso cast another severing curse, splitting it down the middle. Almost immediately, the spider legs on the pillow fell off.

"That's very interesting," Harry muttered. "The switching spell left the spider and snake instincts, even after I transfigured the rabbit back to a pillow, but once the living animals died..."

"The switched body parts of them died as well." Calypso paused before a smile crossed her face. "Harry this incredible, you just defied one of the longest standing laws of magic! We have to show this to Professor Rosemburg."

"Oh yeah, we should definitely do that," Harry said.

Calypso smirked as she helped Harry gather his notes before leaving the room.

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A Brother's Plea

Main Hall, April 15th

Calypso had been absolutely right about Rosemburg, but even she had underestimated their professor's reaction to Harry's discovery. After explaining what he had done, and repeating it for the professor, Rosemburg had absolutely flipped. Rosemburg had dragged Harry into a staff meeting where he had Harry demonstrate the discovery yet again. It had been a little disconcerting for Harry to see the shocked expressions on several of the Durmstrang faculty members' faces. The Highmaster himself praised Harry's ingenuity, and Rosemburg had begun writing an article to publish Harry's discovery in *Transfiguration Today*, the largest and most respected Transfiguration magazine in Europe.

Rosemburg's announcement in the staff lounge had only been the tip of the iceberg for Harry. A few days later he had turned in his perfect Polyjuice potion to Professor Kral, and had once again found himself to be the subject of an inordinate amount of praise. When Professor Kosarev jokingly said that he hoped Harry wasn't ignoring his Charms class for Potions and Transfiguration, Harry had explained his enchanting project and the progress he had made on it. The Charms professor had immediately written him a note excusing him from Transfiguration, and dragged Harry into his office and had him show him his progress. Two hours later, Kosarev could be found in the staff lounge praising Harry's ability at Charms and calling him a one and a million talent.

Of course, the real shock to the professors came after Viktor let slip that Harry was seriously attempting to break Grindelwald's record for the most Master ranks in a single year. According to Calypso, who learned it from her father, the faculty at Durmstrang were seriously discussing the possibility of Harry achieving six Master ranks. Even Professor Cherny, the typically standoffish Spell-Creation professor, had asked Harry to wait after class one day to ask about his final project. Harry presented his blinding spell to Professor Cherny, who agreed that it was an interesting, if self-limiting, dueling technique, and that he would have a chance at the Master award depending upon the projects his peers designed.

With Calypso assuring her father that Harry would have an amazing Dark Arts project for him, a lot of professors began to seriously believe that Harry had a chance to best Grindelwald's ninety-seven

year academic record. Professor Cristof, Durmstrang's History teacher, knowing that Harry would need to place first on her final exam to get the illusive sixth Master rank, created an early study guide for him, hoping to help the young student surpass Grindelwald.

"When is your next match, Viktor?" Harry asked.

"We play Lithuania on the 12th of May.. They are a good team, but as long as our beaters can keep their chasers off-balance, we should easily win. I've been watching Pensieve memories of their Seeker after practice, and he is dependent on the same two or three moves. I've spent most my time at practice learning how to counter him. We should win and clinch a spot in the World Cup without having to worry about the Poles, which is a good thing as their Seeker is much better."

"So you're telling me I should place another bet on Bulgaria to win, and for you to catch the Snitch." Harry laughed. It wasn't a secret that Harry had probably been the only person to actually bet on Bulgaria and Viktor to win against Germany. Most of the school had been rather envious after they had heard how much money he had made off such a small bet. The Goblins had also not been happy, and Harry figured that for Bulgaria's next game the odds were likely to be less outlandish.

"Yes, Harry, I think a bet on Bulgaria is always a smart decision," Viktor agreed as an owl entered the Hall and immediately landed near Harry.

"A letter from home?" Viktor asked.

"No, my parents have always liked snow owls. This is your standard Hogwarts barn owl, so this is probably from my brother."

Harry,

I need your help. Hermione has been attacked by Slytherin's monster and has been petrified! I know we haven't been getting along great right now, but I don't know who else to turn to for help.

Dumbledore has been removed as Headmaster by the Board of Governors, and Mum and Dad are totally freaking out. McGonagall has been named temporary Headmistress, but there have been all these rumors about the school closing.

Harry, Mum and Dad are considering withdrawing me from Hogwarts. They're worried that I might be attacked next by whatever it is that got Hermione. Dad wrote me a letter saying that Dumbledore was going to be having a talk with them about me staying at Hogwarts for the time being, and that they'll decide if I can stay at Hogwarts after they talk with him.

Do you have any idea what the monster in the Chamber of Secrets might be? It can petrify anything, including ghosts! I can't think of anything that could affect a ghost, they're already dead after all.

Can you please look in the Durmstrang library for any magic that can petrify things? Ron and I are looking through the Hogwarts library, but you're always saying how Durmstrang's library is better because you don't have a restricted section. Please help Harry.

Nathan

"Viktor, I've got to go to the library," Harry said.

"Why? Is everything alright?"

"No, my brother's friend was attacked at Hogwarts by some creature that has the power to petrify."

Viktor looked confused. "Petrification? There are many creatures and spells that can do that."

"I know, but whatever is attacking students can petrify anything, Viktor, including ghosts."

"That... should not be possible."

Harry nodded his head. "I know, but there is something at Hogwarts that has attacked and petrified a ghost."

"Did your brother tell you anything else?" Viktor asked.

Harry re-read the letter and shook his head. "No, just that his friend Hermione had been petrified, and that my parents are considering removing him from school."

"Then before you go tearing the library apart looking for any creature or spell that can petrify someone, you should write your brother and ask for more information."

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What Ever Doesn't Kill You

Harry's Room, May 1st

Harry stood in the center of his room, all of his furniture, books, and personal effects had been shrunk and moved to a single corner in order to minimize the damage that his Dark Arts project might cause. Standing ten feet away from him was Calypso, who, without warning, cast a Jelly-Brain Jinx.

Just as the spell was about to hit him, Harry whipped his wand across his body, smacking the jinx away from him and into the nearest wall, leaving only a slight scorch mark against the stone.

For the next twenty minutes, Calypso began steadily increasing the dangerous nature of the spells she sent at Harry. Simple jinxes soon gave way to hexes, which eventually led to minor curses. In order to give Harry an easier time deflecting the curses, Calypso had taken to speaking all the incantations out loud. While she was positive her father would cast each spell non-verbally, she was more interested in giving Harry practice at deflecting spells rather than simply cursing him senseless.

In order to gain the rank of Master for his third year Dark Arts class, Calypso had been teaching Harry a technique that she knew her father thought was very important, deflection. While standard hex and jinx deflection were introduced at the start of fourth year, curse

deflection wasn't introduced until fifth year, and many were never able to master it. Deflection, like shielding, was one of the most important techniques to learn if one was going to go far in dueling.

While shields were used to block unfriendly curses, for the majority of hexes and jinxes, a shield was simply overkill. Deflection allowed a wizard or witch the means to avoid unfriendly spells that were not powerful enough to require a shield. It also took away the burden of learning hundreds of counter-jinxes and counter-hexes. It wasn't necessary to remember the exact counter to the Jelly-Legs Jinx if you could harmlessly redirect the spell away from you.

Even though the magic required in deflection was somewhat advanced, there was a very simple reason for why deflection was introduced to older students and why still many failed to learn it properly. Deflecting a spell meant staring down an oncoming jinx, hex, or curse until the spell was quite literally an arms length away. Only then could one strike out and redirect the spell away. In the face of an oncoming spell, many people froze up or reverted to casting a shield. Fear and uncertainty in their own ability was what ultimately handicapped many wizards and witches.

While deflection was typically used with jinxes and hexes, it was possible to deflect a curse, which was what Harry was desperately trying to learn how to do. Unfortunately, deflecting a curse was much more difficult than a jinx or hex. Curses, by definition, were a malicious piece of magic, intended to harm or disable another person. The intent behind a curse was so much greater that deflecting a curse required both excellent timing and a great amount of mental willpower. Even if you perfectly timed your deflecting of a curse, if you weren't properly focused, the curse would simply overpower the person trying to deflect it.

When Calypso had first demonstrated curse deflection to Harry, he had been surprised at how determined she had looked. When Harry had sent the body-bind curse at her, he had been amazed at how Calypso had stared down the curse until it was only a few feet away from her. Then, at the last possible second, she smacked the spell away with the tip of her wand.

"Confundo," Calypso snapped.

Harry watched as the swirling pink spell raced towards his chest. At the last moment, he brought his wand across his body only to slightly miss the spell, which sent him to his knees. Harry tried to stand up only to pitch forward onto the ground. Why couldn't he stand up? He wanted to stand up. Maybe he was standing up. Yes, staying on the ground was the same as standing. That made perfect sense. "I'm ready for the next spell, Calypso." Harry called out from the ground waving his wand in a dramatic fashion.

"I'm sure. Just hold still, Harry." Calypso said walking over and applying the counter-curse.

The strange feeling left him, and Harry looked up to see Calypso smirking at him. The memory of trying to block the Confundus curse hit him, and Harry blushed. "I think I've embarrassed myself enough for today. Let's pick this up tomorrow."

"You're getting better," Calypso said.

"But am I doing good enough to get the top spot in Dark Arts?"

"No, not yet, but you've got a month, and I'll be working with you every day."

"You just enjoy cursing me," Harry said with a wry grin.

Calypso laughed. "True. That certainly makes helping you more entertaining."

As Calypso began packing up her things, a sharp tapping could be heard against one of Harry's windows. Looking outside, Calypso saw a small barn owl flapping its wings, waiting to be let into the room. With a flick of her wand, the window popped open and the small bird flew inside and landed on Harry's shoulder.

After removing the letter from the bird's leg and watching it fly away, Harry quickly opened the letter and began to read.

Calypso watched curiously as Harry's face scrunched up in annoyance the further he read. When he reached the end of the letter, he shook his head in derision, crumpled the letter up into a ball, and tossed it into his rubbish bin.

"Trouble?" Calypso asked, picking up his discarded letter.

"No, it's just a letter from my brother. There have been some problems at Hogwarts this year, and my brother's friend was petrified."

"Ah," Calypso said knowingly, "the chamber of secrets."

Harry's head snapped up. "How do you know about that?"

"You do realize that you're not the only person who knows someone at Hogwarts, right?" Calypso said sarcastically. "My cousin Draco wrote me a while back talking about how I was clearly missing out by being at Durmstrang."

"So, do you have any ideas what the monster might be?" Harry asked hopefully.

"It could be anything from a Gorgon to a clutching Fire Salamander," Calypso said indifferently. "There are hundreds of different ways to go about petrifying someone, and who's to say it's actually a monster and not just some student practicing dark magic?"

"But the legend—"

"Could be a load of hippogriff shit." Calypso finished before an annoyed look crossed her face. "Oh, by the way, why didn't you tell me your brother was a parselmouth?"

Harry swallowed nervously and bit back his initial response of 'because I don't know if I can trust you.' Instead he bitterly said, "I really didn't want to talk about my stupid brother."

Calypso looked at Harry in surprise. That was the first time she had ever heard him actually insult his brother and seem to mean it. "What do you mean?"

"When I found out that Nathan was a parselmouth over the Christmas break, I was really excited." Harry said patiently. "I thought it was the coolest thing in the world. My brother had one of the rarest abilities in the world. There's practically nothing written about parselmouths , and I couldn't wait to see what he could do with the ability."

"So, what happened?" Calypso asked, curious.

"Well, at first, everything was fine. Nathan was obviously glad I didn't think he was the second coming of the dark lord." Harry's eyes narrowed in anger. "But when I asked him to show me the ability, to actually see what limitations it had, he refused."

Calypso arched her eyebrow. "Limitations? I'm pretty sure the only thing the ability grants is the power to speak with snakes."

"Yes, but is that all it can do?" Harry pressed. "The only other parselmouth in recent memory was the dark lord. For all we know, parseltongue isn't just the ability to talk to snakes, but command them. Since snakes don't have ears, there's obviously a magical component to the language. Who knows what kind of power or control a parselmouth might have over snakes."

"I suppose your right," Calypso conceded. "I take it your brother didn't want to experiment with the ability?"

Harry snorted. "That's an understatement. He kept going on and on about how everyone thought he was a dark wizard. I basically told him to practice or else he was wasting a rare talent."

"Did he eventually practice?"

"Of course not," Harry said bitterly. "I tried to push him towards practicing, but it didn't really work out the way I planned."

"What did you do?" Calypso smirked.

"I may have put a few conjured snakes in his room," Harry admitted, slightly embarrassed. "It wasn't my best plan, and Nathan ended up getting bit by one of them. How he let a snake sneak up on him when he can hear the bloody things talk, I'll never know. Still, he freaked out, and I got into a bit of trouble. Fortunately, none of the snakes were venomous."

"I take it your brother didn't appreciate your help?" Calypso asked between laughs.

"No. He tried to hex me if you can believe it." Harry looked slightly smug. "Naturally he was the one that ended up getting hexed."

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A Friendship Fallen?

Calypso's Room, May 12th

"...Krum pulls up...HE HAS THE SNITCH! Bulgaria wins 310 to 190! Bulgaria goes to the World Cup!"

Harry cheered as Calypso stood up and turned off the wireless. "I knew he could do it," he said happily.

"I suppose if Krum is going to waste most of his time playing Quidditch at least he is good at it," Calypso replied.

"You're just upset that you didn't place a bet with the Goblins when I offered."

Calypso sniffed imperiously. "Betting is for peasants, Potter."

"Well this peasant, just made fifty more Galleons," Harry taunted.

"And what are you going to do with your new-found wealth?" Calypso asked. "Buy a broom and ask Viktor for flying lessons like the rest of the school?"

Harry rolled his eyes. After Viktor's stunning victory over the Germans, many of the people who had previously called him an idiot had started to worship the ground he walked on. Viktor, of course, found the sudden change of attitude by most of his peers to be utterly pathetic, and he did his best to ignore the majority of the student population. Kira, however, was not ignoring the sudden urge by most the girls at the school to date the resident Quidditch superstar. She had made it well known that any attempt to poach her boyfriend would be met with very hostile force, and she demonstrated her point by cursing a fifth year, who was loudly talking about buying some love potions to slip to Viktor. Harry could only imagine what Viktor's latest victory on the international stage would do to his reputation.

"I'll be sure to ask Viktor to book my flying lesson right after yours. I know how much you love Quidditch, Calypso."

"Oh, yes, of course," Calypso said sarcastically. "My dreams are filled with Snitches."

Harry paused. "Is it weird that my brother's dreams probably are filled with Snitches?"

"Yes, and speaking of your brother, how is he?"

"Miserable," Harry said bluntly. "It looks like Hogwarts is going to close any day now."

Calypso smirked. "Think he'll end up coming to Durmstrang next year?"

"Nathan? At Durmstrang?" Harry laughed. "No way. Beauxbatons maybe. Not that I would blame him for choosing to go to a school that actually accepts Veela."

"Are you saying that there aren't pretty girls here?" Calypso asked challengingly. "Because I certainly know someone who would love to hex you for saying something like that."

"Hmm..." Harry said pretending to think very hard. "Gorgeous Veela, or angry witches that like to curse me... decisions, decisions."

"Prat," Calypso said, firing a stinging hex at Harry.

Without thinking, Harry deflected the incoming spell right into Calypso's desk, causing parchment to go flying everywhere.

"Whoops," Harry said apologetically. "I'm sorry about that." He bent down to help Calypso pick up the scattered rolls when he saw a very familiar piece of parchment at his feet. Picking up the parchment with his name on it, Harry looked up and saw briefly saw Calypso's eyes widen before her face took on an eerie indifference.

"Harry James Potter, born July 31st 1980. Brother of the Boy Who Lived, Nathan Potter. Transferred to Durmstrang from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Harry demonstrates a unique ability to command magic, specifically Transfiguration and Charms. He has well above average knowledge in Potions; however, he possesses a reluctance to use the Dark Arts." Looking up from the parchment, Harry stared at his friend for a moment. "What the hell is this, Calypso?"

Calypso faltered slightly. "It's nothing Harry," she said as she casually tried to take the parchment from him.

Harry held the parchment out of her reach and tried to continue reading.

"Accio parchment," Calypso said, summoning the parchment out of his hands.

"Calypso," Harry said angrily, "what is that!"

"It's nothing important."

"Then tell me what it is!"

When Calypso remained silent, Harry turned and stormed out of her room, slamming the door behind him.

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Of Truths and Tests

Durmstrang, May 25th

With a slight limp, Harry walked down the hallway to his bedroom, prepared to quickly pack his stuff and go home. He had just finished his History exam, and while he had certainly done well, he wasn't certain if it would be enough to get him the rank of Master. Professor Cristof's study guide had been a huge advantage, but while Harry could appreciate the importance of history, he would much rather work on a practical final project.

Of course, while Harry enjoyed practical work, he didn't love getting injured, which was just what had happened to him during his Dark Arts exam earlier in the day. He had explained his final project to Professor Rosier, and asked that the professor send an ever-increasing level of dangerous spells at him to deflect. Rather than opening with a jinx, Professor Rosier had opened with the Retching Hex, a spell with which Harry was intimately familiar from earlier in the year. After four more hexes, Professor Rosier began throwing curses. Simple leg-lockers and body-binds were quickly replaced by the Conjunctivitis and Babbling Curses. Harry managed well enough until Professor Rosier had sent a bone-breaking curse at him.

Caught momentarily off-guard by such a violent spell, Harry was too late in defending against it, causing the curse to break his right leg. Professor Rosier had called for Lady Shulga, who quickly cast a healing charm to mend the bones. Fortunately, it was a clean break and while there would be some bruising, Harry would be fine by the end of the day.

Harry had left the Dark Arts room confident that he had done well enough to get the rank of Master, and a little disappointed that the achievement really didn't mean that much to him anymore. It had been Calypso who had helped him practice for his Dark Arts exam while pushing him to try to usurp Grindelwald's academic record, and the two hadn't spoken since he had confronted her.

Viktor had been supportive of his decision, and, naturally, Kira had claimed that he was better off without Calypso. Not that Kira particularly cared how he felt, she just wanted to throw in into Calypso's face that she didn't have any friends. When Harry overheard Kira saying just that in the library, he had been tempted to go over and help Calypso. Ultimately, however, Harry decided that Calypso could be his friend whenever she wanted, all she needed to do is explain what she was doing.

Therefore, it was a bit of a surprise when Harry opened his door his room to find Calypso standing there waiting for him.

Removing his wand, Harry did his best to ignore her as he began shrinking his bed, removing the charms on his room, and packing his belongings. Calypso had come to see him, and if she had something to say, he wasn't going to drag it out of her. After almost ten minutes of continual charm work, Harry's room was back to its rather ordinary spartan appearance. Without acknowledging that Calypso had even been in the room, Harry picked up his trunk and started to walk out. When he opened the door, Calypso finally spoke up.

"You're angry."

Harry stopped and turned around, giving Calypso his attention for the first time since entering the room.

She licked her lips nervously. "I know you want to know what that piece of parchment was about."

Harry put his trunk down and sat on top of it. "Are finally ready to tell me?"

"No I –"

Quickly standing up, Harry shot Calypso an angry look and started to pick up his trunk and leave.

"Wait. Just wait, Harry," Calypso said, taking a step forward. "I can't tell you what it is because...well, it's complicated."

"Just tell me the truth, Calypso," Harry said simply.

"I know what it looks like," she said. "But I'm not trying to spy on you or your family. If you believe anything, please believe that. I've never asked you any questions about your brother besides what you've volunteered, and you know I could care less if he's the Boy Who Lived."

Seeing that Harry had stopped trying to pick up his trunk, Calypso relaxed somewhat. "That said, I can't tell you what that parchment is."

"Why not?" Harry demanded impatiently. "Just be honest with me."

"It's not about honesty, Harry, or even trust," she said softly. "I need you to learn something called Occlumency before I can tell you about the parchment."

"And what exactly is Occlumency?"

Calypso smiled. "Please, I know you, Harry. You'd rather find out yourself than be told anything."

"Calypso," Harry warned. "This isn't some silly school project, it's our friendship."

Sobering slightly and losing the slight smile on her face, Calypso nodded her head. "I know, Harry, I know. Occlumency is...well, it's hard to really describe. It's a very obscure branch of magic that deals with the mind. Now really, Harry, that's all I'm going to be able to tell you. If my father found out I've said as much as I have, he would be upset."

"Why? I don't understand."

"My father likes to test people," Calypso sighed. "You passed a major test with him earlier today by doing as well as you did on your final project. Congratulations, by the way. He said you managed to deflect six curses before he managed to hit you."

"Calypso, you're rambling. So your father wants me to learn Occlumency, and if I don't, you won't tell me why you're digging up information on me?"

"I am sorry, Harry. I know it sounds unfair, and I really do want to tell you what's going on, but it's important that you know Occlumency first," Calypso explained.

"And if I learn Occlumency, I will be?" Harry asked pointedly.

"Yes," Calypso said immediately. "Learn Occlumency, and I swear I will tell you everything you want to know. I'll even make an Unbreakable Vow if you want. We can go get my father or one of the other professors to be the binder."

"You're serious," Harry said in surprise. "You would actually make an Unbreakable Vow?"

"Yes."

Harry wasn't sure what to say. Agreeing to an Unbreakable Vow was not something to joke about.

"Please, Harry," she said. "Just promise me you'll try to learn some Occlumency this summer."

"Fine," Harry relented, picking up his belongings.

"Thank you," she said, placing a small kiss on his cheek.

Harry looked at her awkwardly, not sure what to make of everything. "Right, err, I guess, I'll be off then."

"I'll see you next year, Harry."

"Yeah. Goodbye, Calypso."

Calypso watched as Harry walked out of the room. A moment later, her father appeared beside her. "You think he'll manage it?"

"I do," Calypso said certainly before her face darkened. "This is it, right? All Harry needs to do is learn Occlumency?"

In response, Romulus simply placed his invisibility cloak back on and walked out of the room.

A/N: Okay, I know I said August, but I just couldn't get that transfiguration scene the way I wanted it. I'm still not exactly happy with it, but I just couldn't see holding back the rest of the chapter any longer for something I can edit later.

Happy 1 year anniversary to this story.

Big thanks to Perspicacity, my beta group, and everyone over at DLP– this chapter wouldn't have been nearly as good without your comments.

And, speaking of DLP, I am rather proud to announce that Dark Lord Potter has created the single best C2 in the history of fanfiction. The link can be found in my profile page, and, AFTER you review, I suggest you go check out and subscribe to the C2. The C2 features some of the best stories and authors in fanfiction, many of which don't get the props they deserve.

So just to review:

1. Leave a review
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Chapter 10

Summer of the Mind

Headmaster's Office, Hogwarts, May 29th

It was late. Past one in the morning, but no one would know that from the large group that had congregated in the Headmaster's office at Hogwarts.

"Where is Nathan now?" Lily asked nervously.

"On the Headmaster's orders, I gave Nathan and Ron a light sleeping potion, and let them return to Gryffindor tower. Ms. Weasley however, will be spending some time in the infirmary," Madam Pomfrey explained. Seeing the look of distress forming on Molly Weasley's face, she added, "Ginny's stay in the hospital wing is purely precautionary, Molly. There is no reason to suspect that she is still being possessed."

If he hadn't just watched Nathan's memory of the Chamber of Secrets in Professor Dumbledore's Pensieve, Harry wouldn't have believed his brother capable of it. Slaying a basilisk at the age of twelve was impossible! Yet, somehow, Nathan had managed it with some help from Fawkes, the Headmaster's phoenix.

Harry had been terrified when he heard his mother scream in the middle of the night. Not knowing what to expect, he grabbed his wand and quickly rushed downstairs. He found his parents about to depart to Hogwarts with Professor McGonagall, and he demanded to know what was going on. His father had briefly explained how Nathan had gone, along with Ron Weasley, into the legendary Chamber of Secrets and managed to save Ginny Weasley from the Heir of Slytherin. Harry was told to go back to bed, and that Sirius was coming over to watch him just in case.

His parents left through the floo with Professor McGonagall. Once they were gone, Harry had returned to his room and quickly changed out of his pajamas. He made it back downstairs just as Sirius arrived to Godric's Hallow. Sirius had tried to stop Harry from flooing to

Hogwarts, but, as he wanted to know what was going on himself, Harry was eventually able to convince his godfather that they both had to find out what was happening.

Stumbling out of Professor Dumbledore's floo, Harry was met with several wands pointed at him. Before anyone could tell him to go home, however, Sirius stepped out of the floo, and everyone's ire shifted to the man who was supposed to have been keeping Harry away from the floo. While his parents yelled at Sirius for letting Harry come to Hogwarts, Harry looked around the Headmaster's office. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were both present and appeared exhausted. Likewise, Professor McGonagall looked uncharacteristically tired and emotionally drained. Harry was surprised to see that Professor Dumbledore had retaken his position as Headmaster, and he greeted his pseudo-grandfather with a hug.

While Harry's parents both felt he should not be present for the meeting, Professor Dumbledore said it was unlikely that Nathan would keep such an adventure from his brother, and by showing him what happened, Harry would not pester Nathan for information about the incident. Lily and James eventually conceded, and Harry was allowed to stay and watch Nathan's memory of the Chamber of Secrets in Professor Dumbledore's Pensieve.

"Can I go talk to Nathan?" Harry asked once the memory ended.

"Harry, it's late," Lily said. "Your brother has been through a lot. Let him sleep."

"Speaking of sleep, I think you should get home as well." James said, placing his hand on Harry's shoulder. "You know Nathan's alright, and you saw what happened."

"Alright," Harry said, fighting back a yawn. "I just wanted to tell him I was proud of him."

Dumbledore smiled. "I will certainly pass the message on for you, Harry."

"Thank you, sir. I'm glad you're back at Hogwarts."

"As am I, Harry. I confess that the old castle has become my home, and I missed it terribly when I was away."

As Sirius led Harry back towards the Floo, Harry stopped and turned to Fawkes, who was watching the meeting with an air of detached interest. Harry approached the bird and pet its plumage. "Thank you for helping Nathan, Fawkes."

The phoenix let out a content chirp and fluttered over to land on Harry's shoulder. Fawkes rubbed his head against Harry, who continued to pet the bird.

"I think I might be jealous, Harry," Dumbledore chuckled cheerfully. "First Fawkes comes to Nathan's aid, and now he is sitting on your shoulder. James, Lily what exactly did you do to raise two incredible boys?"

Harry blushed as Fawkes let out a short amused thrill before flying back over to his perch.

"We kept both of them as far away from Sirius as we could," Lily joked.

"Oi," Sirius said indignantly, "Fawkes loves me! don't you Fawkes?"

Fawkes simply looked at Sirius with a bored expression on his face causing everyone in the room to laugh.

Harry was ready to go home when he noticed the large bookshelves next to Fawkes' perch, and an idea popped into his head. He hadn't had any luck finding information on Occlumency in his family's library. Although, if Calypso was to be believed, Occlumency was a form of mind magic, something that Harry had never even heard of, let alone seen a reference to in his family's small library. Professor Dumbledore, on the other hand, was the smartest person Harry knew. Surely, he had heard of it!

"Professor Dumbledore, can I ask you a question before I leave?"

"Harry," James said, exasperated. "You need to go home. It's way past your bedtime, and your mother, the Weasleys, and I still have a lot of things to discuss with Albus."

"Now now, James, it's alright," Dumbledore placated. "Harry, you may ask me one question, but then you need to be getting home. It is, as your father said, quite late."

"Have you ever heard of a magic called Occlumency?" Harry asked. "I've been looking for it in our library since I got home, but I can't seem to find anything about it."

Albus was unable to hide his surprise at the question. "Harry, why are you looking for information about Occlumency? And for that matter, how did you learn of it?"

"A friend of mine at Durmstrang suggested I study it. She said it was a form of mind magic I might be interested in learning," Harry said evasively. "But I can't find any reference to it in our library."

"No," Albus said after a moment. "I would not expect for any information on Occlumency to be in your family's library, Harry. The few books that there are on Occlumency are coveted by many private collectors and magical governments alike."

"Do you know Occlumency, sir? Or do you have a book I could borrow that talks about it?" Harry asked hopefully. "I swear I'll take very good care of it."

Dumbledore hesitated for only a moment before saying, "I do know Occlumency, Harry, as does Professor Snape; however, I am sorry to say that I do not possess a book on the subject."

"Oh," Harry said dejectedly. "Well, thank you anyway, sir."

"It's quite alright, Harry. I do hope you have a pleasant summer," Dumbledore said as Sirius ushered Harry over to the floo.

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The Arrangement

Godric's Hallow, June 15th

Nathan's return from Hogwarts was met with a small party at Godric's Hallow. The tension that had plagued Nathan and Harry during the Christmas holidays was completely gone. While Harry and Nathan still disagreed about Nathan's ability to speak Parseltongue, the two brothers had made a silent agreement to never bring up the subject. Both brothers came to a shared understanding that they would never be able to convince the other of their point and felt that the argument just wasn't worth making anymore.

With cordiality reestablished between the two brothers, Harry explained to Nathan a lot of what he had been up to at Durmstrang. While Nathan admitted that he didn't fully understand why Harry was so excited about his Transfiguration final project, even he couldn't help but be impressed and excited by his brother's attempt to break Grindelwald's academic record. Nathan also agreed to help his brother's search for some reference to Occlumency in the Potter family library.

Nathan's willingness to help lasted all of three days before he called it a lost cause as Professor Dumbledore predicted.

Harry, however, outright refused to give up looking for information on the elusive skill, and spent an ever increasing number of hours in the library, something that began to worry his parents. In the short time since Nathan had returned from Hogwarts, Harry had often lost track of time in the library, needing to be reminded to come to meals, and dragged out of the library by his father or mother to go to bed. His father had even gone so far as to ban him from the library one day after he found Harry fast asleep with his face in a book, having not gone to bed the night before.

When pressed about why he was so interested in Occlumency, Harry always responded that the idea of mind magic greatly interested him. He was evasive to any other questions, a fact both Lily and James were quick to pick up on. After Lily's offer of summer Potions lessons

were refused by Harry in lieu of spending more time in the library, she decided enough was enough.

"Harry, exactly why is learning about Occlumency so important to you?" she asked sternly.

Harry was saved from answered immediately though when an imperial great horned owl swooped into the room and landed in front of him.

Harry,

I am happy that your brother is good. A Basilisk is a strong creature, so I am happy he was hurt not.

For your question, I asked, and my match with Poland is not be broadcast by British Wizard Wireless Network. You will have to read in paper about my Quidditch victory!

I will say that we play hard against Poland, and I try to catch the snitch. Poland is good team, and I need practice against good teams for World Cup. I know I beat Poland Seeker to snitch, so if you place bet again, bet for me to catch snitch!

I hope all is good with you.

Viktor

P.S. How is my English writing? I have been working hard at it.

Laughing slightly, Harry put Viktor's letter down. After Viktor had taught him the main dialect used in Bulgaria, Harry had offered to repay his friend by teaching him English. Viktor had agreed, but they hadn't been able to practice for very long before the end of the semester. Viktor, while not having as bad a retention rate as Harry, was still on the lower end of the spectrum for the language charm, resulting in his rather fragmented understanding of English.

"Something funny, Harry?" Lily asked curiously.

"Oh, it's just a letter from my friend," Harry smiled. "Here, read it. I've been trying to teach him English with the language charm, but we weren't able to work on it for very long before the semester ended."

Lily took the offered letter and frowned at the poor grammar and obvious lack of understanding of the language. When she got to the end of the letter, her eyes narrowed ever so slightly. "Harry," she said, "what does your friend mean about placing a bet again?"

"Um..."

"Harry James Potter, have you been gambling?" Lily demanded.

"I-well, sort of, but not really..."

"It is a yes or no answer, young man," Lily said sharply. "Do I need to call your father in here, or are you going to tell me the truth?"

"Okay, yes," Harry admitted. "But before you get upset. It was only ten galleons at first, and I only did it to help a friend."

Lily looked dubiously at her son. "Explain."

"My friend Viktor was on Bulgaria's junior national team when there was an injury to Bulgaria's starting seeker," Harry explained. "The Bulgarian Seeker had to retire because of the injury, and Viktor was selected to replace him. Bulgaria's home media thought the coaches were giving up on making a run to the World Cup, and just giving Viktor some experience at the highest level. No one believed that he would be able to compete against wizards and witches decades older than him. I placed a small wager with the Goblins in Prague to show Viktor that I supported him and thought he could win."

"So it was only the one time?" Lily clarified, softening her tone somewhat.

Harry shuffled his feet and looked down at the ground. "Um, well, Viktor's played two games, so I bet both times."

"Harry, this ends now," Lily said sternly. "How much money have you lost to the goblins?"

"None. I won. Viktor caught the snitch in both games," Harry said brightly.

Lily sighed. This had just become more difficult. It would be easy to convince Harry that gambling was wrong if he had lost money, but winning made it harder to see the consequences of gambling. "Exactly how much did you win, Harry?"

Harry mumbled a number looking uncomfortable.

"Speak up, Harry," Lily chided.

"I said I've almost made over one hundred galleons."

"Harry, look at me," Lily demanded, causing her son to quickly look up. "You've only bet two times?"

"Yes," Harry said, nodding his head. "The first time Viktor played, the odds against him catching the snitch and Bulgaria winning were 15-1. My five galleon bet turned into 75 galleons, and the next match, the goblins gave me 5-1 odds against Viktor catching the snitch and Bulgaria winning and..."

"I get the picture, Harry," Lily sighed. This was not good. Her son had made a lot of money gambling, which could turn into a dangerous habit. "Harry, you will not gamble anymore. Is that clear?"

"Well, what if I just bet on this one last game? Everyone thinks Bulgaria is going to lay down and play their reserves because they've already clinched a spot in the World Cup, but Viktor's note says he is going to be playing and trying to win. I bet I can get some great odds with the goblins."

"No," Lily said. "This ends now. I will be contacting Gringotts to have your trust account frozen before you can withdraw so much as a knut to bet with the goblins, Harry."

Harry was about to snap that he had a separate account, but, ultimately, decided better of it. "Alright, I swear I won't gamble anymore."

"Thank you, Harry." Lily sighed in relief. "Gambling can be habit forming, and I really don't want you to become accustomed to doing it."

Nodding his head, Harry went back to reading his book.

"Harry, why don't you come downstairs for lunch. I was about to tell Nathan to come inside anyway."

"I'm alright," Harry said dismissively. "I'll make something later."

Lily frowned. Her son's desire to find out about this Occlumency was becoming borderline obsessive, and it worried her a lot. She had been debating over the last few days whether or not to contact Severus and ask if he might be willing to show Harry the magic. She had already contacted Albus, and, from what he told her, Occlumency didn't sound like anything Dark. Sighing, Lily said, "Harry, please come down and get some food with your brother. I promise I'll floo Professor Snape tomorrow and ask if he can give you some Occlumency lessons."

Harry's head snapped up. "Really?" He asked happily.

"Yes, but can you please tell me why learning Occlumency so important to you?" Lily asked. "I don't know a lot about it, but from what little I understand it's very difficult, and uncomfortable to learn."

"I just really want to learn it," Harry replied. "It seems really useful."

Slightly upset that she hadn't been given a better answer, Lily said, "Alright, I'll ask him tomorrow. Now, can you go tell your brother it's time for lunch?"

"Okay." Harry immediately stood up and quickly raced outside, he never saw the concerned look on his mother's face as he left.

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Mind Magic 101

Godric's Hollow, June 22nd

Getting Professor Snape to Godric's Hollow was more difficult than convincing him to give the lessons themselves. Since the Potters' floo was only connected to one other floo, Albus Dumbledore's, and one needed to know the location of the Potter's home under the Fidelius charm to be able to floo there, Professor Snape had to take a portkey specially created by Professor Dumbledore.

Another problem that had to be negotiated was that Snape refused to enter the Potter home as long as James, Sirius, and Remus were on the property. There had been a bit of an argument about that condition, until Dumbledore managed to convince Snape to let Remus remain during the lessons. Harry had felt a little guilty that his lessons would essentially kick his father and godfather out of the house, but his mother pointed out that his father, Sirius, and Nathan, who also didn't want to be around Snape, would use the time to go to Diagon Alley or maybe to a Quidditch match, which they all would enjoy.

So, at half past twelve, James, Sirius, and Nathan all floo'd to Sirius' house, and a few minutes later, the surly-looking Potions master standing in the sitting room of the Potters home.

"Severus, thank you for coming," Lily said giving her old friend a hug.

"Yes, well, I could hardly turn down the opportunity to get my hands on some powdered Romanian Longhorn horn. I was unaware that there would be any more produced for the rest of the year, you must tell me your suppliers' name, Lily," Snape commented.

"Maybe, Severus, maybe."

"It's good to see you again, Professor Snape," Harry said respectfully.

Snape appraised Harry very carefully before nodding. "I do hope you know what you are asking for, Mr. Potter. Occlumency is not a

subject learned by the faint of heart or the weak of will. It will be uncomfortable, unpleasant, and at times painful. I will give you no leeway, and I have no interest in having my time wasted."

"Always the rainbow of optimism, Severus," Remus said entering the room.

"Lupin," Snape sneered in response.

"Enough. Let's not fight. Severus, would you like anything to drink before you begin?" Lily offered.

"Perhaps later, Lily. For now, I require only privacy with Mr. Potter for his lesson."

"Alright. Remus, let's leave them alone. Good luck Harry," Lily said planting a kiss on his cheek before leaving the room.

Once Lily and Remus had left, Severus turned to Harry, his expression darkening. "Your mother went through a lot of trouble to get me to give you these lessons, Potter. I hope you don't decide to back out after you realize what you've asked for."

Harry's resolve grew. "I'm not going to back out. I need to learn Occlumency."

"Very well, Potter," Snape said. "Before we begin, tell me what you know of Occlumency,"

"Very little, sir," Harry admitted. "I understand it's some form of mind magic; however, I'm not sure what its purpose is."

"And yet you feel you need to learn it? How very curious," Snape commented, causing Harry to curse himself for his slip. "Occlumency, Potter, is a defensive form of mind magic. It is used to prevent a practitioner of Legilimency from penetrating your mind. A strong Legilimens can navigate through the many layers of a person's mind and correctly interpret their findings. The naïve call this mind reading, but make no mistake, Potter, the mind is not a book to be read. A truly exceptional Legilimens does not even require a wand or

incantation. He merely needs eye contact to judge a person's surface feelings and intentions. This is what Occlumency protects you from."

Harry knew his face had paled by the time Professor Snape was done speaking. Mind reading! Calypso was trying to warn him about someone reading his mind! That's why she couldn't tell him what was on that piece of parchment. Because the very information could be taken from his mind without his knowing!

"Potter!" Snape snapped. "Are you paying attention?"

"What?" Harry asked started from his thoughts. "I'm sorry, Professor. The reason my friend wanted me to learn Occlumency just became clearer."

"Indeed. Had you been paying attention, you would have heard me explain how the most basic form of Occlumency involves clearing one's mind to prevent a Legilimens from perceiving one's emotions and thoughts. More advanced Occlumency involves suppressing only the thoughts, emotions, and memories that the invading Legilimens is seeking. A strong Occlumens can thus make the Legilimens believe he is telling the truth when he is lying or lying when telling the truth. This requires a great deal of will power and practice; however, the benefits of Occlumency are vast. A master Occlumens has a great deal of control over his or her emotions and is even capable of resisting Veritaserum."

"Now, clear your mind of emotion and prepare yourself," Snape said, drawing his wand. "Legilimens!"

The spell struck Harry in the head and he felt his vision swirl and become replaced with a familiar scene.

"Wait. Just wait, Harry," Calypso said, grabbing his arm. "I can't tell you what it is because...Merlin, this is hard."

"Just tell me the truth, Calypso," Harry said simply.

"I know what it looks like, but I'm not trying to spy on you or your family. If you believe anything, please believe that. I've never asked

you any questions about your brother besides what you've volunteered, and you know I could care less if he's the Boy Who Lived."

Calypso let go of his arm. "That said, I can't tell you what that parchment is."

"Why not?" Harry demanded impatiently. "Just be honest with me."

Harry fell to the floor gasping for air. He felt like he had just run a marathon, and he was completely exhausted. What had happened? How had he ended up on the floor?

"Pathetic, Potter," Snape said darkly. "That was a rather poor first attempt at clearing your mind."

Realization dawned on him, and Harry struggled to sit back into his chair across from Professor Snape. "That was Legilimency?"

"Yes, the most blunt approach." Snape answered. "Were you not prepared for it, you would have likely only felt like you were recalling a memory. Now, are you prepared to go again?"

Harry wanted to say no. He wanted to tell Snape never to cast that spell on him ever again, but Calypso's voice echoed in his head. 'Learn Occlumency and I'll tell you everything.' Nodding his throbbing head, Harry did his best to not think of anything, and signaled for Professor Snape to cast the spell again.

"Legilimens!"

There was nothing at first, and then Harry felt a building pressure on his mind, and before his eyes the room fell out of focus.

"Read this and stop making me look like an idiot," Calypso snapped.

Glancing at the large book, Harry looked up and read, "Befuddling, Breaking, and Bashing: A Guide to Questionable Magic. Are you trying to tell me something?"

"I didn't tell my father that you were smart only to have you nearly lose your first few duels. I'd start reading that if I were you. We're going to have a few practice duels to get you back into shape after class today."

"It's not like I lost..."

Harry saw the sitting room slowly swim back into focus, and he moaned, grabbing his head in pain.

"That was slightly better," Snape said grudgingly. "You were able to stop my initial attack, but you let your guard down, and I was able to project my anger into your mind to affect your emotions. I was able to use my anger to find a memory of someone else showing anger toward you."

"How do I stop you from doing that when I don't even understand how to clear my mind?" Harry asked. "Isn't there some sort of technique you can teach me?"

Snape sneered. "I can only teach you the way Professor Dumbledore taught me. I received no book or instruction of any kind. In Albus' own words, 'the best Occlumantes are self-taught.'"

"Should I be feeling nauseous?" Harry asked weakly.

"Are you too ill to continue? Good. I'll go get that drink your mother offered instead of wasting my time working with you," Snape said, making to stand up.

"No," Harry blurted out. "I-I can go again. I can do it."

Snape sat back down and looked penetratingly at Harry. For a second Harry thought Snape was going to leave, but the man quickly whipped out his wand and shot a spell from its tip. Reacting instinctively, Harry used his wand and tried to deflect the spell away from him. He managed to, partially, but the spell stayed on the tip of his wand for less time than any curse he had ever seen. Before Harry could move the spell far enough away from himself, the spell ran off

his wand's tip and struck him in the side. Harry tried to fight the dizzying feeling, but once again he felt his vision swim.

"...wearing Grindelwald's mark," Harry said.

"Idiots, I hope someone cursed them for it. They probably thought they would look cool by wearing it."

"Dirk and Heinrich's families supported Grindelwald, much like yours did R—"

"NO!" Harry heard himself shout as if from a thousand miles away as the pressure on his mind immediately lessened and then disappeared.

Once again, Harry found himself kneeling on the floor and feeling completely exhausted. His body hurt. His mind hurt. Looking up, Harry was surprised to see Professor Snape also on the ground a few feet away from him. The man slowly stood up, and, after a moment's hesitation, offered a hand to help Harry stand. Harry gratefully took it, and slowly stood as well.

"You tried to deflect the spell," Snape said in amusement.

Harry blushed. "Um, yes. I worked on spell deflection with a friend, and it was just instinct."

"You also managed to generate a weak shield charm to throw me out. Was that intentional as well?" Snape asked.

"No," Harry admitted tiredly. He hadn't even realized he'd cast a spell.

"I believe we are done for the day, Mr. Potter," Snape said after a moment. "Practice clearing your mind before you go to sleep at night, and I will return next week."

"That's all we're going to do?" Harry asked trying to hide his relief.

"Mr. Potter," Snape said exasperatedly, "I don't know if you are aware, but it has been almost an hour since we began, and I have no

intention of being around when you father returns. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll see about getting some tea before I leave."

Harry nodded his head and went to upstairs, intent on getting some sleep. He was halfway up the stairs when he decided some tea sounded very nice. Turning around, Harry walked back downstairs.

"Do you have any idea why Harry is so interested in Occlumency, Severus?"

Hearing his mother's voice, Harry froze just outside the kitchen, his heart beating very hard in his chest.

"No," Snape replied after a moment. "However, from what you've told me, I believe I saw the person who mentioned Occlumency to him. The same girl was present in each of the three memories I saw."

"Harry mentioned he had a friend named Calypso," Remus remarked. "Could it be her?" .

"I believe that was her name," Snape said, doing his best to ignore the werewolf. "However, why she wants Harry to learn Occlumency, I do not know."

"How did his first lesson go?" Lily asked hesitantly. "We heard him scream. I know you said Occlumency could be intense, but...but surely there is an easier way."

"If there was an easy way, I suspect more witches and wizards would take advantage of the benefits that come from being an Occlumens," Snape replied. "As far as his first lesson, it went as I expected. His first attempt was horrendous, and I was able to see a fairly important memory. It was recent, and it was some sort of argument between him and the Calypso girl. I won't lie to you, Lily. The girl was claiming that she wasn't spying on Harry or your family. She went on to say that she didn't care if Nathan was the Boy Who Lived. It was an unusual memory that, I admit, I wish I could have seen the end of."

"Spying? Should I be concerned about Harry at Durmstrang, Severus?" Lily asked worriedly. "He seems so much happier there, but if his friends feel the need to tell him they aren't spying on him..."

"I honestly don't know," Snape admitted. "The memory was important, but I felt many different conflicting emotions coming from Harry, and I didn't see it in its entirety."

"And I suppose if I confront him about it, he'll just tell me it isn't important." Lily sighed. "He's becoming so closed-off at times. It worries me."

"He is about to become a teenage boy, Lily. Of course he is going to become closed-off and rebellious about certain things. I would be worried if he wasn't," Remus joked.

Lily laughed. "I guess I am a little sad that my two boys are growing up."

"Yes, well," Snape said uncomfortably, "I suppose I should be leaving before Potter and Black come home."

"Thank you for doing this Severus," Lily said honestly. "I know we have the same potions supplier, so you must not need any more powdered longhorn horn. You're a good friend."

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A Rat on the Run and Duping Dumbledore

Godric's Hallow, July 14th

Harry sagged into the chair, his head aching, but he had a certain air of accomplishment about him. While he still couldn't stop Snape from entering his mind, Harry managed to immediately detect Snape using passive Legilimency on him when he arrived, and he averted his eyes, managing to break the connection. Snape said it was a good sign that he was developing a self-awareness of what was and wasn't a part of his own mind.

The lessons were still brutal of course, and Harry was in pain for almost a day afterward. His father, godfather, and brother, upon first seeing the state he was in after the lessons, were ready to flee to Hogwarts and curse Snape. Fortunately, Harry had been able to explain that the pain was just a part of the training, and that it lessened as he felt himself improving.

Much as Harry expected after overhearing Snape's conversation with his mother, Snape began targeting memories of Calypso in order to find out more about her. In his four Occlumency lessons, Snape had seen memories of Harry and Calypso laughing, arguing, talking, and even dueling with one another. While Harry had been unable to stop Snape from seeing the memories, he had been successful in keeping Calypso's last name a secret.

"How much longer do you think it will take?" Harry asked, tiredly following Professor Snape into the kitchen where his mother waited with two fresh cups of tea for them. After spying on his mother and Snape's private conversation, Harry had decided to take tea with them after his Occlumency lessons. While he was sure his mother could find out the information from Snape at another time, it wouldn't be as fresh in the professor's mind as immediately after a lesson.

"You're improving, but you still have a great deal to go if you want to learn this before you return to Durmstrang," Snape said, having seen enough of Harry's thoughts to know that was indeed his goal. "My only advice is to work harder."

"That's always your advice," Harry muttered in annoyance.

"You can't expect miracles, Harry," Lily said. "From what Severus has told me, you've done very—"

"Lily! James! Are you there?" Dumbledore frantically called from the living room.

"In the kitchen, Albus," Lily said, standing up in alarm. "What's wrong?"

"Lily, I'm glad I caught you... Severus, what are you doing?...Oh, of course, your lessons with Harry," Dumbledore said. "It's good that you both are here. Lily, I have some rather grave news to tell you. Peter has escaped from Azkaban."

In a matter of seconds, Lily's face shifted from disbelief to horror. "That's impossible! No one has ever escaped from Azkaban."

"I'm afraid his cell was found empty by the dementors earlier today," Dumbledore explained. "The news is being suppressed for right now, but unless they can find him soon it will be made public knowledge."

"But how?" Lily demanded. "The Auror's were aware of his animagus form, and he was kept in a high security area."

A particularly angry look crossed Dumbledore's face "The minister, in his infinite wisdom, was scheduled to visit Azkaban today. The Dementors were moved into the Prison basement and the wards were relaxed somewhat in preparation for his visit. The Auror's believe Peter used the opportunity to escape his cell."

"Who was stupid enough to relax the wards? The minister has to visit Azkaban every year, this was never a problem befo—"

"The minister was never required to tour the high security wing before, Lily. Peter is Azkaban's only long term Animagus prisoner, and somewhere in the bureaucracy the proper procedures were ignored in lieu of the Minister's visit." A goat Patronus burst through the window and Dumbledore bent down to listen to it. After a moment, he turned back to Lily and said, "There will be time to discuss this later. Where are Nathan and James? They must be informed."

Lily's face paled. "They're in Diagon Alley with Sirius."

"Please have them all return as soon as possible." Dumbledore turned to Snape. "Severus, I need you to go and make use of your less savory contacts. Find out if anyone is going to be providing a safe haven for Peter."

Harry watched, slightly frightened, as his mother rushed out of the kitchen to contact his father, and Professor Snape nodded grimly before activating his portkey and disappearing.

"Everything will be alright, Harry," Dumbledore said softly. "We will catch Peter."

Harry looked up at the headmaster and was shocked to feel the slight intrusion of Legilimency against his mind. Rather than simply averting his gaze, Harry tried a trick Professor Snape had told him about. When a Legilimens was trying to get a passive look at someone's surface emotions, a skilled Occlumens could push a different emotion to the forefront of their mind to confuse the invading Legilimens.

Doing his best to suppress the fear he was feeling for his family, Harry focused on the anger he felt when he realized he had no friends in Ravenclaw. Harry remembered how they would bad-mouth him behind his back and try to subtly jinx him in the dorms. Doing his best to follow Professor Snape's instructions, Harry projected his anger towards Dumbledore.

Slowly, Dumbledore's expression grew more and more concerned as he continued to receive the false emotions. "My boy, are you alright?"

"It worked, didn't it?" Harry asked, immediately breaking eye contact with Dumbledore, effectively cutting the connection.

Dumbledore looked at the child in confusion. "Did what work, Harry?"

"You were using passive Legilimency," Harry said, ignoring the shocked expression on Dumbledore's face. "I tried sending you some false emotions. It worked, didn't it?"

Dumbledore shook his head in amazement. "I apologize, Harry. I merely wanted to sense how you were taking the news of Peter's escape. I must say that I am quite surprised that you have taken to Occlumency so quickly. I suppose that will teach an old man from trying to use such a tactic with you ever again. I was quite convinced you were about to attack me for a moment. I think I will ask next time I feel at all inquisitive about what you are thinking."

"I've never been able to project a different emotion before just now, sir," Harry said proudly. "I only recently learned how."

"Remarkable." Dumbledore smiled. "I do hope that when you are writing your memoirs, Harry, that you choose to leave out that I was the first person ever to be fooled by your mind magic. I do have a reputation to uphold."

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Fall of the Dark Lord

Harry's Room, July 31st

It was a very subdued thirteenth birthday for the two Potter boys. The threat of Peter lying in wait in his Animagus form just outside the wards kept both boys firmly inside the boundaries of the house, and neither of them were allowed to visit Diagon Alley or any other major wizarding area. However, Peter wasn't the only thing that dampened the mood for the two recently turned thirteen year olds.

Nathan's best friend, Ron Weasley, had written weeks earlier and told Nathan that he wouldn't be able to come over for his birthday after his family won the Daily Prophet's annual 1000 Galleon draw. The normally cash-strapped Weasley family had decided to go on holiday to see their eldest son Bill in Egypt. Nathan's other best friend, Hermione Granger, was likewise holidaying in France with her parents, and apologized for not being able to be at his birthday either.

As for Harry, he received a card and a present from Viktor, who explained that unlike the Junior National Team, the Bulgarian National Team had people who were paid to cater to the "petty whims" of the Quidditch players and would go out and buy things like presents when the players didn't have time.

Opening Viktor's gift, Harry was pleasantly surprised to see an interesting looking book on enchantments as well as several small objects. A knife, a teacup, a small stuffed Veela doll wearing a Bulgarian National team Jersey, and four unenchanted Quidditch

balls that were typically given to little children. After quickly reading Viktor's letter, Harry smiled. Viktor had given him a book that described several interesting and difficult enchantments, along with the items to enchant. He would certainly enjoy Viktor's present later in the summer. Testing what he could do with enchantments was always fun. Dangerous, yes, but fun nonetheless.

Putting Viktor's gift aside, Harry made his way downstairs where his brother and father were listening to the Pride of Portree play the Appleby Arrows on the wireless.

"Who's winning?" Harry asked more to announce his arrival than caring about the match.

"The Arrow of course," James said proudly. "210 to 140."

"Did you hear about how Bulgaria destroyed Poland a week ago?" Harry asked curiously.

"Of course," James said, clearly a bit surprised that Harry had suddenly shown an interest in Quidditch, "Everyone thought that the Poles would win since Bulgaria had nothing to play for. I tell you, that new Seeker of Bulgaria's is something special. They might be trouble for England if we get stuck in their group for the World Cup."

"I don't think anyone is going to top England. Sheer is playing at the top of his game," Nathan declared.

"Maybe," Harry said, "but England is legendary for fielding amazing teams only to come up short. We haven't won the World Cup since the sixties."

"Hey," James said indignantly, "that wasn't so long ago. I was born in 1960 you know, Harry."

"Wow, you're getting up there, Dad. Dumbledore had better watch out," Harry smirked.

"I'll show you who's old," James said, playfully drawing his wand and casting a color-changing charm at Harry's hair.

Harry watched the spell leave his father's wand and swiftly deflected it right at Nathan whose eyes widened dramatically at the spell's radical change of direction. The spell hit Nathan in the face, turning his entire head bubblegum pink.

Harry laughed uproariously. "It's a good look for you, Nathan."

"I'll get you for this, Harry," Nathan warned, drawing his wand.

"Put that away, Nathan," Lily chided, removing the color-changing charm with a casual wave of her wand. "I swear, I leave the three of you alone for a minute, and you devolve into chaos."

"Dad started it," Harry muttered as two large birds swiftly flew into the room. Harry immediately identified both birds as being from Durmstrang, and they quickly landed near him.

"Oooooo," Nathan said with a wicked grin. "Did your grades arrive on your birthday, Harry? Talk about bad luck!"

Harry simply rolled his eyes as he removed a letter from the smaller of the two birds. "Some of us, Nathan, are confident enough that we did well."

"Okay, Mr. Confident," Nathan smirked. "Let's see how you did."

Opening the letter, Harry immediately recognizing the first part.

Dear Mr. Potter,

Congratulations. Your academic scores for your second year have been judged, and you will be allowed to continue your education at Durmstrang Institute of Magic.

Please note that classes begin on the 26th of August. This letter will function as a Portkey to take you to Durmstrang; however, it will only be active between the 20th to the 25th of August. Should these dates prove problematic for you, please contact us no later than the 7th of August. Activation word is Crete.

Sincerely,

Demetri Überzeug

Assistant to the Highmaster

Taking a deep breath, Harry glanced down and took a look at his scores.

Charms: M

Transfiguration: M

Dark Arts: M

Herbology: J

History of Magic: M

Potions: M

Spell Creation: M

Mr. Potter you have passed all of your classes, and you have been cleared to take Fifth Year Charms and Transfiguration, Fourth Year Dark Arts, Herbology, History of Magic, and Potions, and Third Year Spell Creation. You may also choose to take any number of electives, which include Ancient Runes, Arithmancy, Astronomy, Divination, and Magical Creatures.

Harry let out an excited 'whoop' and did a little jig before pulling his brother into a hug. "I did it! I did it!"

"Seriously?" Nathan asked before getting a look at his brother's score card. "Wow."

"Did what, Harry?" Lily asked curiously.

Smiling widely, Harry showed his parents his score card, and quickly explained his goal of breaking Grindelwald's academic for the most

first place rankings in a single year. Needless to say, both Lily and James were flabbergasted by what Harry had managed to achieve.

"That's unbelievable. I can't believe you topped Grindelwald," James said in awe. "How long was that record standing for?"

"97 years," Harry said proudly. "Grindelwald set it in his fifth year at Durmstrang, and I just beat it!"

"You would think that the letter would have mentioned something about it," Lily said, re-reading her son's scorecard to ensure that she hadn't missed anything.

At the mention of a letter, the remaining owl reminded everyone of its presence by making a very loud and angry screeching sound.

Harry quickly made to remove the letter from the larger owl, only to discover a decently sized manila envelope tied to the owl's leg. Once the envelope was removed, the owl departed after sending a glare at each of the four Potters for seemingly wasting its valuable time.

Opening the envelope, Harry was surprised to see a magazine and a letter fall out.

Dear Harry,

By now you should have received your grades. I mailed this letter at the same time, so they should have arrived together.

If you haven't looked at your grades yet, please do so.

Now, let me be the first at Durmstrang to congratulate you on surpassing Grindelwald's academic marks for the most Master rankings in a single year. I knew you could do it, Harry! Every one of your teachers are so very proud of the effort you put into your studies last year, myself included. A small ceremony will be held during the Welcoming Feast to honor your achievement, so please wear dress robes.

If I were you, Harry, I would expect to receive several letters and tokens of appreciation from not only your other teachers and peers, but also from many grateful witches and wizards of Central and Eastern Europe. You might now be asking yourself, how are random people not associated with Durmstrang going to know you beat Grindelwald's record?

I would ask that you now turn your attention to the copy of Transfiguration Today that I attached to this letter. The magazine is an early copy of their August British edition. Please turn to the story that spans from page 5 to page 8.

I knew I would be seeing great things from you, Harry.

Keep up the amazing work,

Professor Rosemburg

Harry glanced down at the copy of Transfiguration Today. Flipping to page five, he gasped and nearly dropped the magazine. There on the front of page five, was a large picture of himself and Professor Rosemburg that Harry remembered had been taken near the end of the term. Harry blinked twice as he stared incredulously at the story, which took up several pages in the famous magazine.

Harry James Potter, Defeater of Grindelwald!

As many of you know, Nathan Potter, The Boy Who Lived, is the only known survivor of the killing curse and defeater of the powerful dark wizard known as You-Know-Who. What is less commonly known is that Nathan Potter has a twin brother named Harry, who also has a penchant for defeating dark lords. In the case of Mr. Harry Potter, however, the dark lord in question has long been captured and punished for his crimes.

Still, long after his defeat at the hands of Albus Dumbledore, the Dark Lord Grindelwald had, until recently, managed to hold onto the record for academic excellence at his old alma mater. Before he became the infamous wizard, Gellert Grindelwald was simply an exceptionally brilliant young man who, during his fifth year at Durmstrang, set the

record for the most first place individual rankings in the school's history.

Unlike Hogwarts or Beauxbatons, who rank students by their overall performance in their combined classes, Durmstrang not only ranks students overall performance, but in each subject as well. Grindelwald set the standard for excellence at Durmstrang with five first place rankings in 1897, a feat that has long been considered by many professors to be unbeatable at the academy. "No one in the last 97 years has come close to matching Grindelwald's academic mark," comments Durmstrang Charms professor Alexander Kosarev. "Typically there are three or four students in each subject who all compete for the honor of the top spot, and it's very rare for any one student to get more than two first place rankings."

Very rare, but not impossible. Just ask Harry Potter. Mr. Potter transferred to the Durmstrang Institute of Magic from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry halfway through his first year. After taking Durmstrang's mandatory placement tests, Mr. Potter tested into third year Transfiguration and Charms classes while testing into Second year Potions, Herbology, and History of Magic. When asked about Mr. Potter's incredible placement test results, a spokesperson from Durmstrang said, "Mr. Potter's placement test was one of, if not, the finest entrance examinations in the history of Durmstrang. The young man did things with a wand I would never have believed possible from an eleven year-old."

Mr. Potter placed first in his third year Charms class at the end of his first year at Durmstrang by perfectly crafting a Semi-Permanent-Enchantment-Receptacle, an O.W.L.- level charm. However, besting peers several years his senior was not nearly impressive enough for Mr. Potter. Earlier this year, Durmstrang's Transfiguration professor contacted this publication with a major discovery made by one of his students. The student in question is, of course, Mr. Potter.

The end-of-term project at Durmstrang makes up for a large percentage of each student's final grade and is designed to not only demonstrate the student's understanding of the material taught, but to go beyond what has been explained in the class. While working on his final project in Transfiguration, Mr. Potter managed to find an

exception to the age old theory that living and nonliving things are incompatible with each other in switching swells (To see the full discovery analysis, please turn to page 7).

After following the instructions in Professor Rosemburg's correspondence, we confirmed that Mr. Potter had indeed made a crucial discovery in the field of Transfiguration, and we were prepared to publish the discovery in our May edition. However, just prior to running the article, we received an additional letter from Professor Rosemburg asking us to delay the publication of Mr. Potter's discovery. Professor Rosemburg explained that Mr. Potter was attempting to do the impossible by challenging Gellert Grindelwald's academic mark at Durmstrang, and how many professors, himself included, were beginning to think that the young man was capable of beating it. Naturally, we were intrigued, and so we agreed to shelf the article for the time being.

Well lady witches and gentlewizards, it gives all of us at Transfiguration Today a great deal of pleasure to report that Harry Potter has indeed succeeded in surpassing Grindelwald's academic record. Mr. Potter achieved the top spot in six classes (Transfiguration, Charms, Dark Arts, Potions, Spell-Crafting, and History of Magic), besting Grindelwald by one! Everyone at Transfiguration Today gives Mr. Potter their best, and if we are to believe Mr. Potter's Transfiguration professor, we will be publishing the young man's discoveries for many more years to come.

Mr. Potter's Final Projects Broken Down...Page 6

Using Broken Enchantments To Facilitate Switching Spells....Page 7

Experts Debate New Discovery ...Page 8

After briefly glancing at the other pages, Harry numbly handed the magazine over to his parents, who gasped and quickly began reading the articles. A few moments later, Harry found himself in a bone-crushing hug from his mother.

"Oh Harry, I'm so proud of you!" Lily said happily. "I can't believe you're published at 13! And you would have been at twelve, had they run your discovery in their earlier edition."

Once Lily released him, Harry found himself to be immediately brought into a tight hug from his father. "This is absolutely brilliant, Harry. I can't wait to show Sirius and Remus. Your uncles are going to be so proud."

The rest of the day was a daze for Harry. He remembered his uncles coming by to congratulate him on his discovery, and how everyone said how proud they were of his achievement. It was all so very surreal that in the years to come, Harry would remember very little of the actual day. However, he would always remember that night.

Lying in bed, Harry was reflecting on the incredible day he had just had when there was a soft tapping on his window. Looking up, he saw a small, inconspicuous-looking owl, painfully trying to stay afloat while carrying a decent sized parcel.

Quickly getting out of bed, Harry let the owl into his room, which, once relieved of its burden, flew back out the window. Glancing down at the small wrapped package, Harry opened the small letter that was on top.

Harry,

Please return this to me the moment you get back to Durmstrang.

Happy Birthday,
Calypso

Happy that his friend hadn't ignored his birthday, Harry carefully unwrapped the gift, which turned out to be a small leather-bound book. When he saw the title, his eyes widened. Opening the book and reading the table of contents, Harry reverently and carefully closed the cover.

From what Professor Dumbledore had said, Harry knew books on Occlumency were rarer than rare, and coveted by just about

everyone. From the note, Harry inferred that the book belonged to Professor Rosier, and that Calypso had probably taken it without his knowledge. Harry did his best not to think what his Dark Arts professor would do if he ever found out that Calypso had just sent one of his rarest magical tomes several thousand miles away with a small, undersized owl.

Looking at the old book, Harry vowed that Calypso's father would never pluck the information from his mind. Romulus would never know Calypso sent him the book.

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The Good and The Bad

Godric's Hallow, Aug. 9th

"Legilimens!"

Harry felt the spell hit him, and he immediately focused on bringing a memory to the forefront of his mind.

"I don't care what you think, Nathan, Professor Snape is not a vampire!" Harry exclaimed.

"Harry, everyone knows it's true," Nathan said. "Have you ever seen him go into the sunlight?"

Harry smiled as he felt Snape's ever-increasing annoyance at the memory that appeared. Harry continued to focus on the memory, replaying it a few times, causing Snape's ire to grow. Just as the Potions Master pushed the full force of his energy into navigating away from the memory, Harry was able to clear his mind of all thought, forcing Snape from his mind.

While Harry still couldn't stop Snape from entering his mind, he had made several impressive strides. It now consistently took Professor Snape at least a few seconds before he was able to overpower, or influence an emotion into Harry's mind. Even once he was in Harry's mind, however, Harry had become adept at withholding valuable

information. The book Calypso had sent was absolutely brilliant at making suggestions to annoy an invading Legilimens.

For instance, if you weren't quite at the level to consistently stop an invading Legilimens, a good way to bother him or her once inside the mind is to focus on hunger. This would bring countless unimportant memories of meals to the forefront of your mind. Once the Legilimens was annoyed at not finding what he or she wanted, it became easy to distinguish the foreign emotions, and thus easier to clear your mind to expel the Legilimens.

"For the record," Harry smirked, "I don't think you're a vampire."

Snape narrowed his eyes and peered intently at Harry. "You led me to that memory intentionally. You knew I was growing frustrated at seeing useless memories of you eating, and you baited me."

"I did," Harry agreed.

Snape stood. "I believe we are done for today. We should have two, maybe three more lessons before you go back to Durmstrang. If you continue to improve as you have, I'm confident you will be able to hold back any Legilimens that tries to invade your mind. Good work today, Potter."

Harry thanked his former professor and went upstairs to tinker with some of the enchantments he had been working on. As he passed his brother's door, Harry sighed. Why was it that every time something good happened to him, something bad happened as well? Less than a week after being published in Transfiguration Today, Harry had stumbled onto a copy of his brother's grades from his second year at Hogwarts. While the end of year examinations were canceled for all non-O.W.L and N.E.W.T years, that didn't mean the students didn't get grades. The teachers simply awarded the students the grade they had earned thus far in the class without an end of year examination.

Nathan had gotten an Acceptable in Potions and only an Exceeds Expectations in Charms and Transfiguration. Harry had confronted his brother and pointed out that he could have done so much better.

That small argument had turned into a larger one when Harry asked what Nathan was doing in case Peter came after him. Their parents had just earlier in the day revealed that Peter had been muttering 'He's at Hogwarts, He's at Hogwarts' in his sleep while in Azkaban, making his parents fear that Peter was going to attack Nathan. Harry had offered to make a list of spells for Nathan to learn, but Nathan had casually shrugged them off as unnecessary, trusting that Professor Dumbledore would keep him safe at the school. It was Nathan's casual dismissal of practicing defensive magic that caused Harry to hex him. When Nathan found himself bound, upside-down, and stuck to a wall in his room. Harry pointed out that if he could do that to Nathan, then surely, Peter, who survived as a spy for Voldemort, would be able to catch him unaware.

Nathan did not take to the hexing so well, and, after a stern lecture from his mother, Harry spent the next two days grounded in his room. Harry had a plan, however. Hermione Granger was going to be coming over along with Weasley to belatedly celebrate Nathan's birthday. If there was one person in the world that could get Nathan to study, Harry knew that it had to be Hermione. It was just a matter of convincing her to convince Nathan to learn some spells that would take Peter by surprise.

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We Fight Because We Love

Godric's Hollow, Aug. 14th

"...And of course I am ever so impressed at your discovery," Hermione gushed. "We haven't learned switching spells yet, but I reviewed a few essays I wrote about them and did a bit more research after I read the article. Do you have any idea when your discovery will enter a textbook?"

"Well, the self-updating books should already contain it, but it'll probably take a few years for the rest of the books to be updated properly," Harry said. "It might be ready by your O.W.L year."

"I certainly hope so. Are you looking forward to going back to Durmstrang?" Hermione asked. "Your mother mentioned some sort of party they are planning for you..."

"Yeah, there is going to be a reception during the welcome feast. I've also been getting letters from most of my professors asking what I like most about their subjects. My friend thinks they're all trying to outdo one another to get me the best gift, and are most likely trying to fish for information."

"You have to write and tell me what they give you," Hermione said. "Oh and thank you again for giving me your old spell creation book. It might take a while for me to translate the German, but I can't wait to get home and read it. I wish Hogwarts offered a course on spell creation. It seems absolutely fascinating."

"I agree. I asked Professor Dumbledore why they don't offer it, and he said that Hogwarts stopped staffing the position in the late 1700s after the failure rate got too high. It is a very tough subject, and few people are ever able to master it."

"Well, I think spell creation would be an absolutely brilliant course to take. I was planning on taking all the electives at Hogwarts, but your mother convinced me that wasn't a good idea. I had no idea I could take the Muggle Studies O.W.L. even if I didn't take the course, and Divination just seems like a waste of time. I'm going to be taking Care of Magical Creatures, Ancient Runes, and Arithmancy."

"Good choices. I'm going to be taking Magical Creatures and Astronomy. I was tempted to take Ancient Runes, but I just can't find a reason to learn a dead language. At least Astronomy can be useful in other subjects, like Herbology and Potions, and knowing about magical creatures is always good, I suppose."

"I wish Nathan had your attitude sometimes. Have you seen what classes he signed up for?" Hermione asked, clearly disappointed.

"Yeah, Divination and Care of Magical Creatures. I can't say I'm happy with his choices, but I'm sure you've heard that I haven't exactly been on the best of terms with Nathan lately."

Hermione looked slightly chastising. "I heard that you hexed him for no reason, so I suppose he's allowed to be slightly cross with you."

"Is that what he told you?" Harry scoffed. "Tell me, Hermione, has Nathan told you there is an insane, homicidal maniac that is most likely trying to kill him?"

"WHAT!" Hermione exclaimed.

"I'll take it that is a no?" Harry asked rhetorically.

"Explain! Now!" Hermione turned slightly pink as she realized how demanding she sounded, and added, "Um, I mean, could you explain that, please?"

"Have you heard of Peter Pettigrew?"

"The wizard who escaped from Azkaban," Hermione said tentatively with a nod of her head.

"Peter was one of my dad's best mates at school. He was sent to Azkaban after convincing my parents to drop Nathan and me off at my mother's parents' house, and telling the Dark Lord where to find us. Peter was a spy for the Dark Lord. He set Nathan and I up to die when we were younger. Fortunately, something happened that night, and Voldemort ended up being the one who died. Peter was captured and given Veritaserum. He confessed to being a Death Eater, and was given life in Azkaban."

"And now he's out," Hermione realized, "and he blames your brother for stopping You-Know-Who!"

"Exactly," Harry said. "I hexed Nathan after he basically said he didn't have to worry about Peter because Dumbledore would protect him. While I agree that Dumbledore will do everything to protect Nathan, Pettigrew is still dangerous. Nathan should be learning some advanced magic to protect himself!"

"I agree," Hermione said immediately, causing Harry to smile at the witch's predictable enthusiasm.

"I was hoping you'd say that, Hermione. Nathan won't listen to me, but he just might listen to you."

"You think I can make Nathan listen when you can't?" Hermione said in surprise.

"Well, there is only one way to find out, isn't there? Where is Nathan?"

Hermione rolled her eyes. "He's showing Ron that new broomstick servicing kit your uncle got him."

"Alright, let's go talk to him."

"Now?" Hermione asked surprised.

"Of course, the sooner the better! I've even made a small list of spells for Nathan to start studying," Harry said. "All I need is for you to convince him to learn them."

Dragging Hermione up to his brother's room, Harry quickly opened the door causing Ron and Nathan to quickly throw a magazine off the bed. Both boys appeared flustered and had an air of guilt about them.

"What were you two doing?" Hermione asked, narrowing her eyes slightly.

"Nothing!" Ron and Nathan said immediately.

Spotting the glimmering cover of *The Nymph's Grotto*, which Sirius had secretly given to Harry and Nathan for their birthday, Harry discretely banished the magazine further under Nathan's bed. If he knew Hermione, she would most likely go off on a tangent about Nathan and Ron looking at the dirty magazine, and Harry needed her focused on the task at hand.

"It doesn't matter," Harry said, giving Hermione a pointed look. "Nathan, Hermione and I want to talk to you."

Nathan looked between Harry and Hermione in confusion before understanding appeared on his face. "Oh, err, wow. Umm, okay, I sort of expected, but I didn't think-What I mean to say is...I'm alright with it, so no problems here."

"Great! Wait...what? Okay with what, Nathan?" Harry asked in confusion.

"Well, you know," Nathan said uncomfortably. "You and Hermione. I mean, I'm not surprised. You're the two smartest people I know, so, well, it's not that shocking that you two would, umm, get together."

Understanding hit Harry and Hermione at the same time, and they both looked at each other before quickly looking away in embarrassment.

"No," Harry said quickly. "We're not... dating."

"We wanted to talk to you about Peter Pettigrew. Harry tells me you're not taking the threat he possesses seriously and we think you need to prepare yourself just in case he is able to somehow get to you in Hogwarts." Hermione said very quickly, still blushing from Nathan's assumption.

"Harry, why did you drag Hermione into this?" Nathan asked tiredly. "Hogwarts is a fortress, and there is no way Dumbledore will let Pettigrew get to me."

"Exactly," Harry said triumphantly. "Hogwarts is a fortress. It's meant to repel armies, not a single insane wizard."

"Please Nathan," Hermione begged. "Harry and I just want you to be safe. Promise me you'll look at learning some defensive spells, just in case the worst happens."

"What kind of magic?" Ron asked, eying Harry with open distrust. He had never really liked Harry, and he had never forgiven him for calling him stupid in front of the entire Great Hall at the end of their first year.

Knowing that Harry had probably filled Hermione in on their family's relationship with Pettigrew, Nathan accepted the fact that if he didn't agree with them now, Hermione would just continually bring it up during the year until he agreed to learn what she wanted. With a sigh, he relented. "What do you want me to learn?"

Harry smiled and took out his list of spells. "Here is a small list of spells I think you should start with," he said, ignoring Ron's sarcastic comment of 'Yeah right, small.' "Most of them are curses and hexes that I've been taught in my Dark Arts class. You should start at the top and start working your way down. The spells get progressively harder, but more powerful."

"Nathan is not learning any dark magic!" Ron exclaimed, causing Harry to angrily glare at him.

"First of all, my brother can damn well decide what magic to learn without your help, Weasley. Besides, do you even know what makes something dark magic?" Harry demanded. "Not that it matters for you of course – you probably still can't cast a proper levitation charm."

Ron made to draw his wand, but Nathan pulled his arm back down. "Ron, don't," Nathan said, knowing that Harry didn't like Ron and would love an opportunity to curse him. "And Harry, Ron's right, I'm not learning any dark magic. Most of the people at Hogwarts are still coming to the realization that I wasn't the heir of Slytherin. I'm not going to secretly start studying the Dark Arts. I'll be seen as the next Voldemort... again!"

"Did you really make a list of dark magic for Nathan to learn?" Hermione asked, aghast.

"No," Harry snapped, "I didn't make a list of dark curses. But even if I did, it's not like Nathan using them against Pettigrew would be a bad thing!"

"Except when your soul turns black and evil," Ron declared dramatically.

"Turns your soul black and evil." Harry repeated, looking at Ron as though he was an insect that needed to be squashed. "Weasley, just out of curiosity, how stupid are you?" Before Ron could answer, Harry said, "You know what, just shut up. People with the intelligence of a Flobberworm don't get to be involved in this conversation. Nathan, take the list, and promise me you'll practice the spells."

Nathan looked back and forth between the list Harry was offering him and the looks of mistrust on his two friends' faces. After a moment's thought, Nathan pushed the list back towards Harry. "I'm not learning anything that might be dark magic, Harry. Dark magic is evil, Dad taught us that."

"Damn it, Nathan, there is no good or evil in magic – there is only the power and the intent that magic is used for! Now take the list!"

Harry immediately knew that he had said something wrong because even before he finished speaking, Nathan was looking at him in horror.

"What did you just say?" Nathan whispered disbelieving.

Wondering exactly what had made Nathan freak out, Harry repeated, "Nathan, listen. All that matters with magic is –"

"N-no," Nathan stammered. "I don't want the list. I won't take it!"

"Nathan! Just listen to me," Harry pressed.

Ron took a threatening step forward. "He said he doesn't want it!"

Finally pushed beyond his limit, Harry whipped out his wand and cast a particularly vicious hex at Ron. The spell struck Ron in the head and, immediately, red snakes began growing out of Ron's hair.

Ron's blood-curdling scream quickly drew the attention of the adults downstairs, who burst into Nathan's room with their wands drawn.

They found Hermione frantically trying to cast every counter-hex she knew at Ron's head while Nathan and Harry were tumbling on the ground fighting.

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The Prince's Praise

Godric's Hallow, Aug. 23rd

For cursing Ron, Harry was grounded for the rest of the summer. Not even Harry's explanation of Nathan not taking the threat of Pettigrew seriously softened his parents' punishment. Harry was confined to his room for the rest of the summer, with the exception of using the bathroom, and taking meals with the rest of the family. His parents had even briefly considered grounding Harry from receiving his last two Occlumency lessons with Professor Snape; however, they ultimately decided against that.

Much to Harry's annoyance, when Snape heard that Harry had used the Gorgon-Hair Hex on Ron, his former professor spent a good twenty minutes scolding him for not using Occlumency to keep his temper. As Professor Snape said, "Being able to keep one's emotions under control when faced with outright idiocy is one of the most valuable benefits of Occlumency."

While Snape was disappointed at Harry's lack of discipline, James had demanded to see the spell list that seemed to be the cause of the fight. Only after Harry showed him the list, which consisted of defensive magic like the shield charm and a few curses, with the most dangerous being the blasting curse, did James admit that Ron had blown the argument out of proportion. Lily was also disappointed with her son for harming a guest, and had, surprisingly, been the one who decided that Harry would be punished for the rest of his summer break.

As for Nathan, he had outright refused to talk to Harry during meals, and kept his distance from his brother on the rare occasions when Harry tried to talk to him.

"Legilimens!"

The spell struck Harry in-between the eyes, and Harry immediately cleared his mind. As the moments ticked by, Harry could feel Snape putting more and more power behind the spell, and trying to project an emotion into Harry's mind to trigger a memory. After nearly five minutes, Snape ended the spell and sagged slightly into his chair. Harry followed suit, rubbing his head gingerly.

"Congratulations, Potter. I daresay you've become better than average at Occlumency."

Harry couldn't help but feel a great deal of pride. He had learned to interpret Snape-speak during the course of their lessons, and to be told he was better than average was a very high compliment from his old Potions professor. "Thank you for all your help, sir. I never would have been able to succeed without your guidance."

Snape nodded, seemingly pleased by the compliment. "I admit it was refreshing to teach someone besides the usual group of dunderheads I am forced to instruct."

"Finished?" Lily asked entering the room with Remus at her side.

"Yes," Snape said standing up.

Lily nodded and then turned to Harry. "Back upstairs, Harry."

Muttering a goodbye to Professor Snape, Harry returned to his room, annoyed that he was still being punished by his parents. It wasn't his fault that Ron Weasley was a complete idiot! If he had been a half decent wizard, he just would have shielded, deflected, or dodged the spell! Instead the moron got hit by the hex and dropped his wand! Then, acting like a scared Muggle, attempted to pull the snakes out of his hair, resulting in his hands being bit.

Glancing down at his Durmstrang letter, Harry once again contemplated activating the Portkey early and going back to school. Now that he knew for a fact that he was good enough at Occlumency, he wanted to talk to Calypso and find out exactly what was going on

with that piece of parchment. He had exchanged some letters with Calypso over the summer, but their friendship was still tenuous from the argument at the end of last term.

Harry was also looking forward to seeing Viktor again. Harry had written to his friend often during the summer, but return letters had been few and far between as Bulgaria's training schedule began demanding more and more of Viktor's time. Bulgaria had been sent to Group E in the World Cup along with Russia, Colombia, and Egypt, and they were already the frontrunner to win the group after defeating Egypt by a staggering 620-80 in their first match. While Harry had been proud of Viktor's accomplishments, the demand of professional Quidditch didn't give Viktor a lot of time for correspondence, and Harry was looking forward to getting back to Durmstrang and seeing his friend.

Decided, Harry summoned his trunk and began to pack his belongings to go back to Durmstrang. He didn't care if his parents would ground him over Christmas for leaving early, at least he wouldn't be stuck in his room any longer.

After packing most of his belongings, Harry turned his attention to the rather troublesome items sitting on his desk. While the initial enchantments Harry had placed on the items Viktor had sent him for his birthday were all perfectly safe, being stuck in his room for the last part of summer with nothing to do had given Harry a nasty case of idle hands syndrome. As such, he had tried improving upon the enchantments he had placed on the knife, teacup, stuffed Veela teddy, and miniature Quidditch balls.

While the knife and teacup were mostly harmless, unless you tried to pick up the knife or drink tea out of the cup, Harry had horribly botched the enchantments on the stuffed Veela teddy and Quidditch set. The stuffed avian Veela had initially been enchanted to be animate, and the small stuffed animal could often be found harmlessly wandering around his room. Unfortunately, animating the stuffed animal was not enough for Harry, and he thought it would be interesting if he could enchant the teddy to send out a small burst of fire, just like a real Veela.

The enchantment failed miserably, and now the small stuffed animal had a horrible tendency to burst into flames if anyone tried picking it up. The flame-proof charm Harry had cast before trying to enchant the teddy ensured that the stuffed Veela always survived its spontaneous combustions.

The burning Veela was nothing compared to the mistake Harry had made with the miniature Quidditch set, however. Initially enchanted to fly around his room, the miniature balls were an interesting sight, and Nathan had been quite envious when he first saw them; however, Harry had wanted to make them more realistic.

Harry still wasn't sure what had gone wrong, but when he tried enchanting the two Bludgers to chase the Snitch and Quaffle and attempt to knock the balls out of the air, the Bludgers had somehow become malicious. The two balls had irreparably damaged the Quaffle and Snitch, and, once the Snitch and Quaffle were destroyed, they began attacking everything else in his room. Eventually, Harry had been able to capture the two Bludgers, and they were now trapped in his spare closet.

Figuring that the Bludgers would be more difficult to deal with than the stuffed Veela, Harry decided to get the worst over with and waved his wand at the closet, opening the door. The two angry enchanted Bludgers raced out of the room and made a beeline for Harry's head.

Just as he was about to cast a freezing charm, the door to his room opened. Quickly turning around, Harry was surprised to see Professor Snape walk inside. With a sharp jab of his wand, Harry closed the door to make sure the Bludgers couldn't escape out of his room.

Snape's eyes widened when he saw the two Quidditch balls head straight for him, and he silently sent a spell at the nearest Bludger, causing it to momentarily freeze before violently exploding. The second Bludger apparently rethought its decision to head towards the professor and tried to escape out of the window; however, Harry swiftly subdued it with a freezing charm, and it fell to the ground immobile.

"Potter, what in Merlin's name is that thing!" Snape demanded.

"An enchantment gone awry," Harry said as he placed the Bludger securely into its box and placed it in his trunk. He'd show it to professor Kosarev and try to figure out what he did wrong. "Is there something I can help you with, Professor? Oh, and whatever you do, don't touch the stuffed Veela on my desk," Harry warned. "It tends to catch on fire."

Eying the innocuous looking teddy that was sitting a few feet away from him with its arms open, apparently looking for a hug, Snape took a step away from the stuffed Veela. "I have one final piece of advice regarding Occlumency, Potter."

"What else should I know, sir?" Harry asked curiously.

"As you continue your practice in Occlumency, you will find that your greater control and understanding of your mind will lead to you developing a fledgling talent for Legilimency."

Harry looked at his old professor in shock. "But I thought Legilimency had to be learned? How would I just develop the talent?"

"What you must understand, Mr. Potter, is that there are many more practitioners of Legilimency than Occlumency. Learning Legilimency can be done in a similar manner to learning any other piece of spell work, and it is not nearly as uncomfortable as Occlumency. However, by learning Occlumency, you have reached an understanding of the mind that most practicing Legilimentes would never achieve."

"But, sir," Harry repeated. "How will I just develop a talent in Legilimency? I don't understand."

"What did I tell you during your first lesson?" Snape said. "The mind is a complex object. By becoming an Occlumens, you've successfully brought both your magic and mind under control. As a side effect of this process, there will be times when you might find yourself inadvertently projecting your mind magic, such as when you are extremely curious or interested in knowing what someone is thinking."

"For someone who is just trying to become a Legilimens, this is the most difficult step in the process, yet it will come easy to you. At first, it will seem like a burst of accidental magic. A sudden realization that someone is lying to you, reading the surface emotions of people, or perhaps seeing part of a memory. It will eventually become burdensome unless you learn to control it. When you do, you will have become a successful Legilimens."

"So while not all Legilimens are Occlumens, all Occlumens are Legilimens?" Harry asked.

"While there are a few Occlumens that try to suppress or ignore the Legilimency, they are few and far between," Snape replied. "Most accomplished Occlumens consider Legilimency one of the most beneficial aspect of learning Occlumency, for in learning one useful talent, you have gained another."

"I understand," Harry said carefully. "Thank you for telling me, sir."

"The best of luck on your next term, Mr. Potter," Snape said, departing from Harry's room.

"Well that was interesting," Harry said, looking at his stuffed Veela. "Do you think I should start learning Legilimency?"

In response, the small Veela happily opened its arms, hoping for a hug. Harry carefully approached the stuffed avian, and was about to pick it up when it erupted into flames.

"What am I going to do with you?" Harry asked in resignation.

The toy had no answer.

Wow, sorry this took so long to get out everybody. The vast majority of this chapter has been ready for sometime, but a real life crisis along with a little procrastination kept pushing the post date back.

I will say that this is probably my personal favorite chapter thus far. I enjoyed taking a very canon and, IMO, a more realistic approach to Occlumency. Anyone who has read a lot of fanfiction has probably

seen some of the more cliché Occlumency techniques that are used by writers. The last thing I wanted was to write another story where Harry builds a 'mindscape' or something equally cliché, and I hope everyone enjoyed my approach to Occlumency.

Finally, I would, again, like to thank everyone over at DLP, especially my beta crew.

Well, I guess that's it. Drop me a review and let me know what you think.

~The Santi

Interlude: Responses

Lily and James

Godric's Hollow, July 31st

"Crazy day, huh?" James asked, climbing into bed next to his wife.

Lily put down the early edition of Transfiguration Today and looked expectantly at her husband. "Any news?"

"No." James sighed. "Still no sign of Peter. Merlin, I never thought I'd say this, but I'm glad Harry's going to Durmstrang now. Peter will have no idea where the school is... Merlin, we don't even know where the school is. Hopefully, Harry will have a calm year, and we won't have to worry about him."

"I-James, I'm worried," Lily admitted.

"Lily, it'll be okay," James said reassuringly, "we know Albus is doing everything he can to keep Nathan safe this year."

"I'm not talking about Peter, and whatever he plans to do..." Lily trailed off slightly before steadying herself. "I'm worried about Harry, James. Neither of us really liked him going to Durmstrang, and I don't like not knowing what goes on at that school."

James nodded his head in understanding. "I know Lily. I feel the same way. Whenever I talk to him about it, I just feel like he's not telling me everything."

"An understatement if there ever was one," Lily said disdainfully. "James, Harry's become more and more reluctant to share things about his time there, and now he's obsessed with Occlumency, which, according to Severus, will likely make him more self-contained. "

"But at the same time," Lily continued, tossing James the Transfiguration magazine, "how can we argue with results like this? I wish I could say that Harry would have achieved the same thing if he was at Hogwarts... but I just don't know if that's true. I know our son is

going to be a great wizard someday James, but I'm a little concerned with how he's growing up. Why won't he tell us more about Durmstrang?"

"I don't know, but I think there's more to his Dark Arts class than he lets on at times." James opened Transfiguration Today and flipped to the page that described his son's final projects. "Deflection is a great dueling technique, and there's no doubt it could be incredibly useful, but have you ever tried asking about his Dark Arts curriculum?"

Lily nodded her head, annoyance radiating off her every feature. "Of course I have, and he always says it's just like Hogwarts, only with a dueling component. He recites countless spells that the class has him learn, and none of them sound bad, but I can tell he's holding back."

"Albus says the school isn't as bad as everyone thinks," James said. "Maybe next time we see him, we should sit down and ask him what exactly he knows."

"That's actually a good idea. Even with his I.C.W oaths, Albus could obviously tell us a great deal about Durmstrang. After all, he did lead the siege on the school during the Grindelwald Wars."

James smiled proudly. "Yeah, Grindelwald. I can't believe Harry knocked the old evil bastard off his pedestal."

"It's an amazing achievement." Lily frowned slightly as she noted some of the worn edges around the copy of Transfiguration Today. The magazine had been passed around a great deal as Sirius and Remus had wanted to come over and read the article themselves. "I think we should frame this and put it in the living room, what do you think?"

"I thought you wanted to send it to Minerva and Albus?" James asked.

Lily shook her head. "No, no, I think I'm going to order them both a copy of the issue. I think we should keep this one, it's an original first print."

"Okay, but are you sure Harry wouldn't want it hung in his room?"

"He might," Lily agreed, "but I'd like his first publication to be where everyone can see it."

"Alright, I'll frame it tomorrow."

Lily smiled, kissed her husband, and with a flick of her wrist, extinguished the lights. "Good night James."

"Night Lily."

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Minerva McGonagall

Hogwarts, Aug. 6th

With a barely disguised scowl, Minerva McGonagall angrily walked back from the Headmaster's office. The topic of their meeting had disturbed her greatly, and she now had to explain to her colleagues that the Dementors would be patrolling the grounds until Peter Pettigrew was caught.

Minerva couldn't blame Albus for saddling her with the duty to inform the rest of the professors, even though it was her busiest time of the year. She knew just how much Albus was juggling right now. The news of Peter's escape, along with the Minister's part in allowing the escape to happen, had caused a political storm at the Ministry and Wizengamot. Fudge was doing everything he could to 'rectify the horrible bureaucratic miscalculation,' which essentially translated to mucking up other people's lives even more.

Albus had tried to get the minister to reconsider the use of Dementors, but Fudge was adamant about being seen as doing something proactive in re-capturing Peter.

The thought of her former student caused Minerva's face to wrinkle in disgust. Peter had made his choice long ago. He wasn't the first Gryffindor to go dark, and, unfortunately, he wouldn't be the last.

Reaching her office, Minerva quickly went about organizing the last few letters to prospective Muggleborn students. Making a note of the students who were out of the country and needed to be visited by a professor, she went about the rest of her duties. When she got to the fifth year boys' prefects list, Minerva fought the urge to hiss at the prospects. For the first time in her 27 years as the Head of Gryffindor house, she had no idea who to select. The two most dominant figures in her fifth year class were Fred and George Weasley, neither of which could, or would even want to, be a good prefect. Unfortunately, the other three boys in their year were hardly exemplary, nor would they be able to control the twins.

Muttering a curse under her breath, Minerva penciled Alicia Spinnet in as the girls' prefect and left the boy's spot blank for the moment. Perhaps she'd speak to Albus later about amending the rules and allowing two girls to be prefects for that year. Angelina's grades certainly made her a viable candidate.

A soft tapping at her window caused Minerva to glance outside and notice a small brown post owl sitting on the ledge. Unlocking the window, the bird fluttered over and Minerva undid the small envelope tied to the owl's leg.

Noticing a note attached to the envelope, Minerva went back to her desk and put on her glasses.

Minerva,

Read pages 5-8. I think you'll be impressed.

Lily

Curious, Minerva removed a copy of Transfiguration Today from the envelope and flipped to the pages Lily's note had mentioned. A single glance at the headline caused her eyes to widen, and she quickly sat down and began to read.

Fifteen minutes later, Minerva set down the magazine, torn between pride and disappointment.

Her feelings were rational, she supposed. Lily and James were two of her favorite students, and she was proud of what their son had managed to accomplish; however, a part of her was upset by what she read. While Minerva remembered overhearing Nathan mention to Hermione that Harry was excelling at Transfiguration at Durmstrang, she hadn't realized the extent the boy had progressed in such a short time.

Losing Harry Potter as a student had clearly been a blow for Hogwarts, and it saddened her that Harry felt he needed to leave in order to get the best education he could. Looking back over Harry's discovery and glancing at the picture of Harry and his new Transfiguration professor, Minerva couldn't help but wonder if she would have allowed Harry to achieve as much had he stayed at Hogwarts.

A part of her stubbornly said yes –that the truly great wizards don't need much instruction or direction.

Still, seeing Harry smile at his new Professor, Minerva wondered if she was being honest with herself. Harry might not have needed as much guidance as some of his peers, but that didn't mean he didn't like the companionship. Ultimately, the boy's loneliness was what drove him to Quirrell and out of Hogwarts.

Sighing, Minerva walked to her fireplace and pulled out some floo powder. "Filius!"

After a moment, the Charms professor's head appeared in her fire. "Minerva, what can I do for you? I was just sitting down for tea."

"I believe I have something you might be interested in seeing."

"Oh, very well," Filius said somewhat reluctantly. "Stand back, I'll come through."

Standing up, Minerva walked over to her desk and poured two cups of tea, and, a few seconds later, Filius had appeared in her office.

"Tea?"

"Thank you." Filius accepted the cup and easily transfigured one of Minerva's straight back chairs into something more comfortable.

"I thought you might like to see this." Handing her colleague the magazine, Minerva added, "The article begins on page five."

Intrigued, Filius began reading at the top of the page, after reading a few lines, his tea lay forgotten on the table.

"He crafted a Semi-Permanent Enchantment Receptacle... as a first year." Filius looked particularly pained as he continued to read. "Mr. Potter's placement test was one of, if not, the finest entrance examinations in the history of Durmstrang. The young man did things with a wand I would never have believed possible from an eleven year-old."

"And we didn't even know," Minerva muttered distastefully. "Such a waste."

Flipping to the next page, Filius shook his head at his former student's discovery. "Unbelievable. He's enchanting as a second year, and he actually found a use for a broken enchantment."

"Soon to be fifth year, Filius," Minerva corrected. "According to the article, Harry will be entering his fifth year in both of our subjects."

Not bothering to hide his scowl, Filius said, "Lady Ravenclaw is likely rolling over in her grave at my mistake."

"Filius, it is not your fault—"

"Don't say it Minerva," Flitwick interrupted. "I was derelict in my duty. Had I not, perhaps Harry would still be a Ravenclaw."

"You have over seventy students to look after Filius, and you alone cannot hold all the blame for what happened to Harry." Minerva countered. "He came to all of us for help. You weren't the only one who turned him away."

"Minerva, a part of me knows you're right, but I cannot help but feel I should have done more."

"You know what they say about hindsight Filius. Not even a time turner can alter the past. You should be happy that he has found his place at Durmstrang. All we can do is try to not repeat our past mistakes. Perhaps it was a lesson we all needed."

"Perhaps."

Deciding that there was no better time to bridge the issue, Minerva said, "While I have you here, there is another matter I must speak to you about."

"Oh?" Filius asked, finally taking a sip of his cold tea.

"I just spoke to Albus. It appears that Dementors will be patrolling the grounds for an undetermined amount of time."

Placing his tea back on the desk, Filius stood up and walked over to the floo.

"Filius?" Minerva asked in concern.

"I will return, Minerva," Filius said tiredly, "however, I sense I'm going to need a headache drought by the time this day is over."

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Dumbledore

Hogwarts, Aug. 7th

Walking out of the floo and into his office, Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore removed the ash from his robes with the slightest flick of his wand. Ever since Pettigrew's escape, he had been bouncing between Hogwarts, the Ministry, and even the I.C.W in Geneva. The constant traveling and sleepless nights were exhausting, but also necessary. Removing the small time turner from around his neck, Albus contemplated going back a few hours and getting some rest

before he needed to look over the applicants for the open Defense and Care of Magical Creatures positions.

The briefest whiff of sulfur gave Albus pause. It was as though something had been recently burnt.

A soft trill from Fawkes bolstered his resolve, and Albus pushed the odd thought to the back of his mind. Feeling better than he had in days, Albus stroked his Phoenix's back appreciatively. Noticing a few darkened feathers, Albus said, "Your burning day is approaching faster than I anticipated. Perhaps the battle with the Basilisk took more out of you than we suspected."

Fawkes playfully nipped at his owner's fingers.

"I know, I know," Albus said teasingly, "you're a mighty creature that fights Basilisks. You don't need anyone to look after you."

Bursting into flames, Fawkes disappeared for a moment before reappearing with a magazine between his talons.

"And what is this?" Albus asked with some amusement, accepting the magazine from his familiar.

Sitting down behind his desk, Dumbledore read the small note on the cover of the magazine from Lily Potter.

If anyone was watching Albus Dumbledore as he read the article on Harry Potter's achievement, they would have been surprised at the Headmaster's reaction to the article. Albus had always held himself as an educator first, and he was well-known for celebrating his students and friends' achievements. Therefore, it was very odd to see not even the slightest hint of pride on his face; however, while there was no outward sign of happiness, Dumbledore did not appear upset or disappointed in any way. The man simply read the article with a consistently blank face, devoid of emotion. The only sign that Dumbledore was even affected by what he read was the slightest hint of a twinkle in his eye as he read about his pseudo-grandson's discovery in Transfiguration.

As soon as he completed the article, Dumbledore set the magazine down and quickly wrote a congratulatory note to Harry for his achievement.

"Do you mind, Fawkes?" Dumbledore asked, holding out the letter to his familiar.

Fawkes looked hesitantly at his master and let out a burst of song before taking the note and flaming away to deliver the letter to Harry Potter.

With a sigh, Albus glanced towards his quarters with a despondent expression on his face. The people at Durmstrang weren't the only ones holding onto memories of Gellert Grindelwald.

Reaching into his robes, Albus removed a small time turner. He gave the device two turns, and felt goosebumps rise on his arms as the device's magic activated to take him two hours into the past. With a casual flick of his wand, he cast a privacy spell on his door and blocked his floo, before getting up and walking to his quarters.

Ignoring the various enchanted objects and devices that sat around his bedroom, Albus walked up to a small muggle portrait of a sailboat and waved his wand. The portrait began to warp and shift before Dumbledore's eyes, and a single shelf of books appeared before him. Removing a small leather-bound journal, Dumbledore re-transfigured the books and shelf back into the portrait.

Running a finger down the spine of the journal, Albus' blue eyes were devoid of their typical mirth.

In flawless German, Albus spat out, "Für das größere Wohl."

Without any other prompting, the book opened, prominently exposing the inscription on the first page for all to see.

The magic and knowledge within this book is dedicated to the wizards and witches of the world. What we start here in Godric's Hollow shall spread across the world. I, Gellert Grindelwald, and I, Albus

Dumbledore agree to pledge our lives, our magic, and our eternal souls to the achievement of the following principles:

That no Wizard or Witch should be forced to hide what they are.

That no Muggle should be free to harass, harm, or belittle those with magic.

That no Wizard or Witch shall EVER submit to the will of a Muggle, for they are the lesser beings.

What we do now, is for the greater good.

Turning the page, Albus stared at the small photograph of two young men standing shoulder to shoulder with broad grins on their faces. Albus watched impassively as Gellert laughed at something before putting his arm over a much younger version of himself. With narrowed eyes, Albus dropped the book to the floor and drew his wand.

With the tip of his wand pointing directly at the small book, Albus hesitated just momentarily before a burst of blue flames leapt from the deathstick, and the book immediately began to burn.

Albus' icy blue eyes reflected the fire, and he never looked away from the burning book until all that remained was a small pile of ash on the floor of his bedroom. With an impatient jab of his wand, Dumbeldore vanished the remains.

Letting out a breath he hadn't realize he had been holding, Albus began to prepare to get some sleep. Noticing his worn image in a mirror, he abruptly realized just how tired he appeared.

That simply wouldn't do.

He couldn't dwell on the dreams of the past any longer, not when the present needed him so very much.

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Snape

Hogwarts, Aug. 13th

Arriving just outside the gates of Hogwarts, Severus Snape looked around expectantly for the carriage that was supposed to take him up to the school. Biting back a scowl at Hagrid's incompetence, he cast a cooling charm on himself to make the wait in the summer heat more tolerable.

Nearly ten minutes later, Severus finally saw the carriage as it crested the hill and came into view of the Hogwarts gates. He did his best to ignore the two Thestrals that were pulling the object; the reptilian-like horses were always an unsettling sight. Opening the carriage door, Snape raised an eyebrow when he saw that the carriage was not as empty as he expected.

"Good evening Severus," Flitwick said pleasantly. "Hagrid mentioned he was to send this carriage for you, and I thought it might be nice to get out of the castle for a while."

Snape looked down at Flitwick with something between indifference and annoyance, but finally nodded his head affirmatively. "Indeed," he said before climbing inside the small compartment.

As the Thestrals began to turn the carriage around, Filius' smile faltered somewhat. "So, I understand you've been giving young Mr. Potter Occlumency lessons, Severus. How is young Harry progressing in the art?"

Fighting his own curiosity about the Charms teacher's motivation for the line of questioning, Snape reached out with Legilimency. He managed to sense the slightest bit of apprehension from Flitwick before the emotions abruptly vanished.

"I have never had great skill with Occlumency, Severus." Filius' tone had grown dark as he purposefully avoided Snape's eyes. "But while it has been a while since I've been on the dueling circuit, I can assure you that I remember perfectly well how to defend against Legilimency."

Snape cursed his rash decision – he should have known Flitwick would have been cognizant of Occlumency, if not versed in it. Legilimency was fairly common amongst world class duelists, and as a world champion, Filius would have had to learn how to overcome it. "If you know I am instructing Mr. Potter, then you should also know Albus has deemed it important to keep the lessons both private and secret. The Potters have many enemies, and with Pettegrew on the loose..."

"I am merely curious about how my old student is doing Severus," Filius looked indignant that he would do anything untoward with the information. "I was quite surprised when Minerva told me about Harry's interest in Occlumency. It's a very rare magic. I presume he is progressing well?"

After a moment, Severus said, "He shows a definite aptitude for the art."

Flitwick leaned back into the carriage chair and sighed. "He was quite a student. Has Minerva shown you his publication in Transfiguration Today?"

"I have not had the pleasure of reading the article." Snape paused before adding, "Though Lily did give me the highlights. She also informed me about his Potions project. Polyjuice as a second year is an impressive brew."

Nodding in agreement, Flitwick said, "Yes yes, I quite agree. It's definitely a N.E.W.T level potion. But I am curious Severus, has Harry ever mentioned anything about his time at Hogwarts to you?"

"I am not there to socialize with Mr. Potter, Filius," Snape said curtly as he mentally calculated how much longer it would take to arrive at the castle.

"Yes, of course not, I only meant that..." Filius dropped his head. "While Minerva might say it is not my fault, I am somewhat ashamed of the role I played in the events that led to Harry leaving Hogwarts."

Severus, you've been inside his mind. Tell me, does he hold me responsible for the unpleasantness of his first term?"

"Even if I knew the answer to that question, I would not tell you," Snape said bluntly. "What I see in Mr. Potter's mind is not your concern." Filius blinked owlishly, and, reluctantly, nodded his head in understanding.

"However," Snape added, "I will say that every major memory I've seen of Mr. Potter has been at Durmstrang."

Flitwick blinked. "Surely not. I might not be the most able practitioner of Occlumency, but I know the theory quite well. When Mr. Potter had just started learning Occlumency, you should have been drawn to the memories that held the most emotion tied to them. Surely, his leaving of Hogwarts would have been one of them."

Severus glancing out the carriage window and was relieved to see them nearing the castle. "All the memories I saw were of Mr. Potter at Durmstrang. I cannot be certain, but, from his progress, it would not surprise me if Mr Potter had managed to subconsciously occlude his feelings towards Hogwarts." As soon as the carriage stopped, Snape opened the door. "If you are so concerned with Mr. Potter's opinion of you Filius, I suggest that you write him and find out for yourself. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have duties to perform."

Snape barely registered Flitiwick's reply as he entered the castle and quickly navigated the dungeon corridors until he reached his office. Locking the door behind him as he entered, Snape sat down behind his desk and removed a small journal from inside a drawer. Flipping to the front of the journal, Severus looked at the spell chain Harry had designed as a first year.

Next to Harry's chain, Severus drew another spell chain from memory. The second chain had never been published, and he could count on one hand the number of people alive or out of prison that knew of it. Slowly, Snape drew a line between the two chains.

It was eerie.

It was disturbing.

It was a mystery, and Severus Snape hated mysteries.

Removing the copy of Transfiguration Today Lily had sent him, Snape quickly flipped to the photograph of Harry and his Transfiguration professor. Ignoring the two men at the center of the photo, Snape watched as a very familiar girl moved into the corner of the photo for the slightest moment.

A freezing charm shot from his wand, causing the picture to become still.

Leaning in closer to get a better look at the black-haired girl, Snape knew she was the missing link. Potter had mentioned that his friend had helped him with his spell chain, and Snape knew from the boy's memories that she was the most likely candidate.

"Calypso," Snape said, testing out the name, "just who exactly are you?"

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Calypso & Romulus

Location Unknown, Aug. 19th

Falling unceremoniously on her bed, Calypso closed her eyes and enjoyed the feeling of her comfortable bed. She'd be leaving for Durmstrang in the morning, and she knew that Harry wouldn't arrive for a few days, which would leave her sleeping on a significantly less comfortable bed until he arrived.

The thought of Harry gave Calypso pause. They had exchanged a few letters, but the situation was tense to say the least.

A quick knock on her door caused Calypso to sit up. "Come."

Calypso watched her father casually walk into her room, his face surprisingly blank.

"Father?" She asked nervously. "Is everything alright?"

"I thought you might like to see this." Extending his hand, he handed his daughter a copy of Transfiguration Today. "Your friend made the cover."

Her eyes widening, Calypso turned the magazine over and her mouth dropped at the image of Harry laughing with Professor Rosemburg on the front of the magazine. Quickly turning to the article, Calypso smiled as she read about Harry's accomplishments.

Immediately after she finished, Calypso looked up at her father. Swallowing somewhat nervously, she asked, "This is good, right?"

"It's certainly impressive."

Annoyed that her father was avoiding her real question, Calypso said, "I know he's learning Occlumency an—"

"Yes." Romulus eyes' grew cold. "I noticed that you sent our only book on mind magic to Britain. A country which, I will remind you, has laws allowing for the seizure of such books."

"Harr—"

"Is a Potter! No matter how famous their family might now be, they are not exempt from those laws like your uncle Lucius." Romulus took a breath, instantly calming himself. "It was a mistake on your part. Do you deny that?"

Calypso narrowed her eyes at her father. "Maybe if you didn't give him a practically impossible task to complete, I wouldn't have to help him."

"So now you believe him to be incompetent?"

"That's not what I said," she countered. "Occlumency books are so rare! How would he figure it out if—"

"Ah, I understand." Romulus nodded sagely. "He isn't incompetent, he's just not resourceful enough to solve his own problems."

"Father!" Calypso said heatedly. "I'm going to work with him when we get back to Durmstrang."

"Of course you will, you don't have a choice. By sending him that book, you've hampered your own development. Tell me, have you improved at all this last month?"

Calypso did her best to appear confident. "Somewhat, sir, I –"

"Legilimens!"

Completely unprepared, Calypso felt her vision drift and begin to fade into a very familiar memory.

Romulus replayed the memory several times before moving onto another. After seeing everything he wanted, he lowered his wand; Calypso fell to her bed, stifling a cry of pain.

"Pathetic."

As much as her mind hurt, Calypso knew her father wasn't talking about her Occlumency ability.

"You know I haven't made any decisions yet, correct?"

Doing her best to sit up, Calypso said, "Yes."

"If you're trying to force my hand..."

Her eyes widened, and she looked up at her father in horror. "But you promised. If...you said if I...that if he—"

"I know what I said." Romulus stared out a window looking troubled.

"I can get you more information on Nathan Potter." Calypso said quickly. "I'll...I'll find a way. Maybe when we're practicing Occlumency together."

Romulus snorted. "The boy hardly trusts you now, Calypso. No my dear, you've burned that bridge."

Seeing her father stand up to leave, Calypso dejectedly asked, "What will it take?"

Pausing at the door, Romulus angrily turned to face his daughter. "Do not pretend that this mess is anything but your own making. You want to know what you can do? Get me useful information, push yourself and him to improve, and do not meddle in my affairs and judgments. Our family has made some rash decisions in the past. I will not make another one."

As soon as her father left, Calypso picked up the copy of Transfiguration Today from her floor. She hoped Harry would understand, but that was asking a lot.

Truthfully, even she wasn't sure what her father wanted anymore. She was only certain of one thing - her father was right. She had been careless, lazy even. If she lost her only real friend because of her own stupidity...

Taking a deep breath, Calypso tried to do the exercises to clear her mind, but after a few failed attempts, gave up for the night.

Looking at the photo of her smiling friend on the magazine, Calypso stood up and placed it on the wall with a sticking charm.

"I'll see you soon, Harry."

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Grindelwald

Nurmengard, Sept. 1st

Days passed.

Seasons changed.

He grew old.

Staring out of his small window, Gellert Grindelwald watched the cold waves of the Norwegian Sea strike the side of his prison.

His prison.

The irony always bothered him - he supposed that was the point. While he had long ago questioned some of his own methods, Gellert would never get over the insult of being trapped by his own magic. Nurmengard was more than just a building; it was a work of art, a true magical masterpiece.

He had designed a prison so formidable and terrible – both from the inside and the outside – that the International Confederation of Wizards had deemed it too cruel to use on common prisoners. Only the leaders of his Dark Army had ever been imprisoned here. His army, more than any others, knew just how much effort their master had put into the spells guarding these walls.

There had been no escapes from Nurmengard. No one had even dared to attempt it.

The ICW had once asked their own enchanters to add protections to the prison, afraid that Grindelwald and his men would know some hole in the magics that would allow them to escape.

It wasn't necessary.

Truly Grindelwald's mind, one of the greatest in the history of wizardry, had continually upgraded and improved upon his prison over the entire course of his campaign. Gellert knew of every enchantment he placed on Nurmengard, and he knew there was no way around them. When the ICW first sent their team of enchanters to increase the security for his cell, they thought they found several flaws in his containment spells, as Grindelwald knew they would. They tried to correct the flaws, only to spend their last moments alive wondering why their necks were bleeding.

In the years that would follow, no less than five guards were killed as they attempted to fool around with the prison's enchantments. The last death led to the virtual abandoning of the upper levels of the prison; house-elves were left to deliver food and remove any waste from the few surviving prisoners.

It was a bit of a surprise, then, to hear the sound of footsteps on the cold stone floor. Only the base of the prison had any guard presence and Gellert knew he was the sole surviving occupant of the prison, and no one ever came to visit him.

The sound of footsteps grew louder and louder until Gellert saw several Aurors through his cell's bars.

"Johann, William, keep your wands trained on Grindelwald at all times." The Auror paused before adding, "Orders are to stun only."

Curious about the sudden influx of visitors, Gellert asked, "May I ask why I have the pleasure of your visit?"

As soon as the first word left his lips, Gellert felt a surge of indignation. His once smooth and cultured voice was now weak from disuse. He hadn't had a reason to have a conversation with anyone since Dmitri Blagojevich died almost three years prior.

"Orders from the higher ups." The lead Auror said, eying Grindelwald with thinly veiled disgust. "Take two steps out of the cell, Grindelwald. And do it slowly."

Grindelwald reluctantly complied, eying the lead Auror with a dark glint in his eye. As soon as he was clear of the cell, and the unforgiving enchantments placed upon it, the Auror captain muttered a soft incantation.

Recognizing the spell, and knowing it would have no effect, Gellert said, "I can assure you, captain, I am no Animagus." Grindelwald fought a grin at the sudden stiffening of the captain and his subordinates. "But I do admit to being curious as to why you would check for that talent now?"

Seeing no harm in answering, a younger Auror replied, "The Brits went and fucked up. Lost a prisoner who was an animagus. The I.C.W. wants to make sure you didn't get any ideas about trying to make an escape. Not that it matters. You probably wouldn't survive the transformation. Hell, you look half dead already old man."

Gellert stared at the young Auror, his Occlumency perfectly concealing his cold fury. He knew prison hadn't been good to him. The poor food and exposure to the frigid environment were slowly killing him. The fact that he'd managed to live as long as he had – long beyond many wizards and witches who were younger and better treated than him in the prison – was a testament to his magic and his willpower. Still, while his mind was just as sharp as the day he was thrown into prison, his body hadn't fared as well.

His hair was the first to go. His blond locks fell from his head only a few months after he was locked away in Nurmengard – to this day Gellert suspected his rapid hair loss was the result of some botched poisoning attempt by the guards. Years without access to hygiene charms had caused his teeth to rot in his mouth, his fingernails to turn yellow with poor nutrition and possibly some kind of fungus, and the continued exposure to the elements and poor food resulted in his body thinning dramatically, until he had become the skeleton of a man that he was now.

His piercing blue eyes, sunken into the depths of his skull, were the only feature that time had not faded. Perhaps it was fate's cruel joke that he would be blessed with perfect vision, yet have nothing to see besides the never-ending waves of the Norwegian Sea crashing against the base of his prison.

His eyes still locked on the smug young Auror who had dared to insult him, Gellert quietly commented, "There was a time when I would have ripped off your jaw for speaking to me in that manner. Do be careful on your descent back down to the first floor. The prison's enchantments – my enchantments – have proven dangerous to your comrades in the past."

"Back into your hole," the captain ordered, growing more uncomfortable with the exchange. He watched as Grindelwald walked back into his small cell before he stepped forward and manually closed the cell doors. "Johann, William, head downstairs. I'll be right behind you."

The two younger Aurors gave one final glance at the now grinning Grindelwald before turning around and leaving him.

"Going to curse me, captain?" Grindelwald asked once the other Aurors had left. "I admit it has been some time since an Auror has vented his rage upon me."

"Don't get your hopes up. I have no desire to curse the half-dead." The Auror smiled slightly. "Besides, from what I hear, your mind is just as sharp as the day you were caught. Sitting around all day and contemplating your fuck ups, knowing you'll never get a chance to rectify your mistakes or reshape the world like you wanted is probably a better torture than any curse I could come up with." A slight smile appeared on the guard's face as he continued to look at the feeble prisoner. "Tell me old man, would you care for some recent reading material?"

Gellert did his best to appear indifferent, but it was difficult. He could feel the Auror's emotions through Legilimency, and he knew the man was greatly enjoying taunting him. Still, Gellert would take any new reading material he could get. Normally, he was only given a new book every year on April 8th – the anniversary of his famous defeat to Albus Dumbledore. The fiction stories were always the most boring, poorly written, and ill conceived pieces of literature in the world – honestly, who would believe an elite school of assassins would be in Canada? – and he had long wished for some kind of connection to the outside world.

The soft thud of a magazine being dropped into his cell brought Grindelwald's attention back to the Auror. "I would suggest that you start on page five. You should find the topic entertaining."

Reaching down, Grindelwald greedily snatched up the magazine in his hands, never breaking eye contact with the Auror until the man turned and left.

Returning to his small cot, the former dark lord was pleasantly surprised to discover the magazine in question was a fairly worn, but recent, issue of Transfiguration Today. Unable to hide his interest in what feats of magic had been pioneered over the last half century, Grindelwald quickly flipped open the magazine and began to read it from page one.

As soon as he read the headline on page five, Gellert understood why he had been gifted this particular magazine. His eyes took in every word of the article. He read and re-read about the young magical prodigy at his old school.

"You finished yet old man?"

Gellert turned to see the young Auror William, the one who had insulted him, had returned; he sported a typical arrogant smirk on his face. He immediately turned his attention back toward the more deserving magazine.

"No."

"Well I'm afraid your time's up. Captain sent me up to get the magazine back. You're not allowed any contraband in your cell." Removing his wand the Auror lazily said, "Accio magazine."

Holding the magazine between his hands, Grindelwald easily fought off the Auror's weak spell.

"What the hell?" The Auror said in surprise. "Accio magazine!"

Once again, Gellert felt the magic wash over him, and, yet again, the summoning spell failed to even tug at the magazine in his grip.

"What are you doing old man?" The Auror demanded. "Turn over the magazine immediately!"

"No."

"Accio magazine!"

Grindelwald smiled and he turned his back to the Auror, gleefully turning the page to re-read Harry Potter's interesting final projects.

"Accio magazine! Accio magazine!"

"Are you quite done?" Grindelwald asked in a bored tone. "My desire to keep the magazine far surpasses your desire to take it. Therefore, you're extremely unlikely to be able to overpower me for it. Has the magical education system really fallen so much since my imprisonment that you never learned such a basic concept?"

"Accio Grindelwald!"

Gellert laughed for the first time in years. Turning around, he slowly stood up and faced the Auror. "Regardless of what my body might appear, my magic remains quite strong. If you think you can overpower me with a summoning charm, you're deluded."

Noticing that Grindelwald was standing less than an arms length away from him, the enraged Auror reached through the bars and grabbed the front of Grindelwald's tattered clothes. Pulling the old man closer, the Auror snapped, "Give me the magazine."

"Why should I?" Grindelwald hissed maliciously. He was inches from the Auror's face, now, and the sudden awareness of just who this prisoner used to be – and still was – hit the young Auror faster than the old dark lord's hideous breath; Grindelwald didn't even have to use Legilimency to sense the sheer terror that was radiating from boy in front of him.

With all his strength, the Auror pushed Grindelwald away, sending the old man tumbling backwards and falling into the stone floor.

"Captain said we shouldn't bother cursing you," the Auror said shakily, slowly gaining back some confidence at the sight of the fallen Grindelwald, "but I think you're just asking for it."

Ignoring the pain in his back from the fall, Grindelwald hid a smile and pushed himself as far back into the cell as he could.

Drawing his wand, the Auror extended his wand arm between the bars of the cell to get a clean shot off.

The sound of a piercing scream, quickly followed by a blaring alarm, alerted the Aurors at the base of the tower of a cell's defensive measures being activated. The four man response team raced up the stairs to the only occupied cell. Upon arriving, they found their comrade writhing on the ground. The young Auror's face was covered in blisters and his right arm was severed at the shoulder. Glancing inside the cell, the Aurors saw a pile of ash just inside, and a content looking Gellert Grindelwald sitting on his cot, casually flipping through a magazine.

"I did warn the boy." Grindelwald spoke up ominously, surprising the Aurors. "I told the boy that my enchantments were quite dangerous. Honestly, reaching through the bars with a wand." Grindelwald scoffed with a small smile on his face as the armless Auror moaned in pain. "Surely this simpleton knew there was a reason I had to be checked for magic outside of the cell."

Gellert watched as the Aurors quickly stunned and levitated their colleague away. The Aurors would get their revenge, he was certain. They'd sabotage his food, or tell the house elves to remove his bed's sole blanket. Still, the look on the arrogant boy's face when he realized what a huge mistake he had made was quite priceless. Yes, he might have made some mistakes in the past, but that didn't mean the undeserving didn't need to be put into their place. For the Greater Good, indeed, he thought, a content grin twisting his lips at the thought of his old slogan.

With a smile on his face, Grindelwald flipped back a page to the photo of Harry Potter and his Transfiguration Professor.

"Thank you for the entertainment this evening, Mr. Potter," Grindelwald said to the waving figures in the photograph, "and my deepest congratulations."

A/N: Well, consider this a holiday treat.

Now, this update is dedicated to the girl who was eating lunch outside on my college campus and decided to discuss my story in public with her friends. When my friends and I walked passed you, I nearly gave myself whiplash when I heard you mention me. I was so very tempted to turn around and say something, but I was with friends, and explaining the concept of fanfiction to them would have been awkward. Still, I found the entire situation hilarious. Thanks for making me laugh back in November.

Anyway, I'm currently going through some rather serious real life stuff at the moment, and I'm going to be away for a while. The story isn't abandoned, on hiatus, or anything like that, but don't expect an update for a month or two. Sorry, but that's life something.

Please drop me a review, and I hope everyone has a great holiday.

Chp12